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**BISMARCK'S LETTERS
TO HIS WIFE**



Whitcomb
Wright - Oct 1891.

BISMARCK'S LETTERS TO HIS WIFE

FROM THE SEAT OF WAR

1870-1871

TRANSLATED BY

ARMIN HARDER

Bismarck, Otto

WITH AN INTRODUCTION BY

WALTER LITTLEFIELD



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INTRODUCTION

IN *Die Bismarck Briefe*, originally published three years ago in Berlin, a notable hiatus appeared which was widely commented on. In spite of the intimate and generally prevailing domestic air of the letters of the great Chancellor to his "liebes Herz," it was supposed that the correspondence omitted, which covered the period of the Franco-Prussian War, might have contained observations calculated to arouse animosity in official circles because of the writer's frank criticism of his military colleagues, or resentment south of the Rhine on account of his attitude toward the French Government, Emperor and generals, and his contempt at the way in which they made

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war; and for these reasons it was thought that the letters written in 1870-'71 had been destroyed. Such, however, was not the case.

Bismarck's communications to his wife in letters and telegrams from the seat of war, except on one point which is worth considering, were quite inoffensive, although they betrayed abundant contempt for the French. They dealt principally with the personal comforts and discomforts which the writer enjoyed or suffered during the campaign, together with impressions and observations concerning the military manœuvres, the salient facts of which have long since passed into history. But even from a military point of view they are still interesting, for the impressions are those of a great man who was not a soldier, but who had the confidence of those who were soldiers. Possibly because of their homely intimacy—a refreshingly human trait in a great man—these communications were held most precious by the Chancellor's wife and were preserved by her in a locked casket

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apart from the others. This casket was not opened at the time of her death, and its contents, therefore, did not figure in the large collection. A year ago the casket was found by a member of the Bismarck family, who examined the correspondence it contained and at once sent copies to the German publisher of the Bismarck Briefe, and in May of this year a small supplementary volume was issued in Berlin, containing not only the casket letters and despatches, but also ten additional epistles written between 1867 and 1870, and 1872 and 1873, which also, omitted from the first published collection, had been issued in *Die Gartenlaube* of December, 1902. In all, there are eighty-nine letters and telegrams.

The first of the casket letters is dated at Mainz, August 2, 1870, on the very day that the French made an attack on Saarbrücken, with three divisions defeated a single German battalion, and proclaimed the result of the engagement an "important victory."

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The Germans then took the offensive, and Bismarck, with the headquarters staff, at length passed from German territory into French, until, after the siege of Metz and the capitulation of Sedan, the invaders, on September 19, found themselves before Paris. The last letter in the main part of the little volume is dated at Versailles, March 5, 1871, two days after the evacuation of Paris by the Germans and a fortnight before the calling together of the first German Federal Parliament.

Above all, the letters reveal a side of the Iron Chancellor's character which, while typically German, appears almost in the light of paradox in the pages of his biographies. There is much good-natured irony over the trials and tribulations of soldiering, the exigencies of which deprive the writer of many things quite necessary to him in his official capacity, but amusingly depreciated by him in the close intimacy of his writing. At times a mere touch is suf-

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ficient; as, for example, the post scriptum to a letter dated Bar-le-Duc, August 25: "Birthday of the King of Bavaria and I without my decorations!" One of the most charming features in the letters is the relation maintained between the father and his two sons, Herbert and William, both of whom rode in the terrible cavalry charge of Mars-la-Tour, where Herbert was shot through the hip and badly wounded, while his brother, although thrown from his horse, was uninjured. The old Chancellor flutters about from one staff officer to another, even stopping soldiers on their march to inquire about his "Knaben." It is not at all strange that such homely solicitation on the part of the great man should arouse some mirth, even expressed to his face. And thus he writes from Clermont, August 27, 1870: "I scented Bill yesterday at St. Ménéhould as being well. Did I tell you that every dragoon of the Third Squadron first laughs when he has to undergo an examination about Bill

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by me? He has a contagious jollity. May God give it to you also." Count William, by the way, was six feet two, and the heavy-weight of his regiment.

For Frenchmen Bismarck had already exhausted contumelious depreciation when the supplementary letters were published last spring; but for one passage alone the almost dormant antagonism against him would possibly not have been revived. On the day before the evacuation of Paris by the Germans, Bismarck rode into the city as far as the Arc de Triomphe. He was "recognized everywhere, hissed a little, but, indeed, only by very small boys." Three days later he wrote, under the date of March 5: "At taps thousands of Parisians followed arm-in-arm with our soldiers, and at the 'helmet off for prayer' everybody took his hat off and said, 'Voilà ce qui nous manque,' and that, I presume, is about right."

This short passage made all Paris howl with rage. "What, Parisians walk arm-in-

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arm with the enemies of their country and show reverence for the prayer-besotted disciples of Luther? Never!" And "Bismarck le Menteur" became a familiar headline in Paris papers. It was in vain that certain Frenchmen, who had long passed from under the influence of "la revanche," hastened to point out that Bismarck's observation, "and that, I presume, is about right," did not mean that he acquiesced in the attitude of the Parisians, but that he spoke merely from hearsay and that the passage should read in French, "*et cela doit être exact,*" or, in English, "and that may very well be true." But either interpretation, it was declared, was a lie and an insult to Parisians. It was a lie for him to say that he heard and saw such things. It was an insult for him to imagine that such things could be possible. Eye-witnesses of the departure of the German troops from Paris arose on every hand to deny, expostulate, or qualify.

These testimonials are interesting, for,

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taken together, they show various phases of conduct on the part of the Parisians which give plausible ground for Bismarck's observations, whatever the source of his information. Some witnesses noted that the Parisians were grateful to the Germans for sending in provisions after the capitulation; others testified that Parisians exhibited unfeigned joy at the departure of their enemies, and that, in certain cases, this joy may have been misinterpreted as betraying a spirit of comradeship; others still, asserted, that while Paris maintained a stolid calm when the German vanguard passed out of the city on March 3, the stragglers were hissed, insulted, and even beaten.

It must, moreover, be remembered, when considering to-day the anti-Gallic sentiments expressed by Bismarck in the intimacy of conjugal correspondence, that the recipient of his letters added to her hatred of the French a certain ferocious bitterness which was perfectly natural for her to possess at

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that time. Of her, Bismarck is reported to have said to Prince Albrecht, October 29, 1870: "The Countess just now is in very good health. Nevertheless, she still suffers from her ferocious hatred of the Gauls. She would like to see every mother's son of them dead—even the children, who, however, are not responsible for such abominable parents."

At least Bismarck wrote in a spirit which was calculated to please what was left of the domestic circle that gathered nightly about the hearth in the Schönhausen.

WALTER LITTLEFIELD.

NEW YORK, *November 6*, 1903.



J. Bismark
Friedrichshagen 1892

BISMARCK'S LETTERS TO HIS WIFE

1

MAINZ, August 2, '70.

MY DEAR HEART:

We arrived here safely this morning at seven, tired but well. I went to bed at that hour, have slept four hours, and should be obliged now to go to the King, if I had something to put on my back. Having only one nightshirt and the traveling suit, I send Abeken to him. Engel has been so smart as to leave all my things behind for the following train, which will arrive at two, but it is just as likely that its freight will stay behind for several days to come. A bed, several pillows, dressing coats, and many other curious things, for which I had no use in the railway compartment, were punctiliously on hand for me, but no linen, no clothes!

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Carl¹ had attended to the provisions—of course four times as much as are needed.

We drove by the hour in *sand-tempo*, lay quiet by the hour, all owing to the military trains, as they barred the way before us. This morning a beautiful sunrise, seen from Bingerbrück. During the first night every time I awoke upon my soft cushions I had to think of the poor boys upon their wooden benches, and how they must be tired out; I have not as yet had any news from them. Bill's birthday I used yesterday to start a little intrigue toward his being made an ensign. I do not know whether it will succeed; the King was astonished that he was not yet a petty officer. It was saddening that I had nothing but white wine with soda with which to drink his health in Hamm, and, to click glasses, only old Bodelschwingh; my other neighbor was *H. M.*

Here I am quartered with a rich manufacturer of champagne, Kupferberg, high upon

¹ Count Bismarck-Bohlen.

TO HIS WIFE

the Kästrich, distant sunny outlook over the city with Rheingau, Wiesbaden-Platte, Russian chapel behind, but so far away from the King and all the others as though I lay in Worms. And then, not a shirt! The enthusiasm of the masses of the people upon the railway stations was deafening; too much for me at present. They should save that till after the victory, which may God give us.

I asked you to send me the red (general's) clothes, not the infantry uniform, because for it I should have sword and a third helmet. Else I need a new white cap every other day and the leather helmet is lighter than the iron one, which presses on my forehead. I think the shipment will be already on the way when this, on these slow trains, reaches your dear hand. From the enemy nothing new. Nothing happened either yesterday or to-day. Saw Cilchen¹ in Düsseldorf, she counts on you in Nauheim. God take you in

¹ Baroness Schreckenstein.

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his care, and your "Berlin youngster" and the two in light blue. Let me know what you hear from them. I shall write you what comes to me.

Your most faithful

v. B.

2

MAINZ, *Wednesday*, 8, 3, '70.

I wrote you yesterday by mail; I hear this minute that a courier is leaving now, and send you this cordial greeting at the moment of sitting down to table. Nothing has happened so far, and I do not know yet how long *H. M.* will stay here. God be with you and our children.

Your

v. B.

3

MAINZ, *August* 5, '70.

MY BELOVED HEART:

Yesterday was the first fighting, near Weissenburg, and victorious for us with the aid of God. The French divisions, Douay

TO HIS WIFE

and Ducrot, were thoroughly beaten; so far 800 (eight hundred) prisoners and one piece brought in. Excepting the King's own regiment, the Frenchmen received their drubbing principally from Poles (Fifty-eighth), Hessians, and Bavarians, thus from those upon whose assistance they counted. To-day, as God wills, the same developments will continue near Sulz and Hagenau. We are still here in Mainz; to-morrow or the day after we shall push forward, when I hope to come in closer touch with our boys in blue. Heretofore I could not find out where the dragoons were stationed every day. With surprise we read here to-day in the French papers of a "battle" which is said to have taken place on the 2d near Saarbrück. This is the most laughable disgrace the *grrrande nation* has ever incurred! Three companies of the Fortieth Regiment and one squadron of lancers kept the whole Napoleon with his main army in respect for eight days! They had orders from home to fall back upon our

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line this side Saarbrück, as soon as the enemy advanced. This, however, they did not do until three French divisions, that is to say, about 150 companies, with artillery and cavalry, moved close upon them, and with these fifty times superior forces the French exchanged shots with our three companies during three hours, from ten to one. Leonidas is a ragamuffin compared with our fusileers. I still live here upon my Kästrich, go driving in the evening and eat, as a rule, at home with our charming host. At *H. M.'s* I generally decline to remain on account of fatigue; it is drafty there in the dining-room, and the high personages are becoming so numerous that my conversational duties are not to be fulfilled without fatigue.

Horses well. God grant it that you both be likewise! How is it about Nauheim?

Your most faithful

y. B.

Oppressive; no rain here.

TO HIS WIFE

4

Telegram.

MAINZ, *August 5, '70.*

COUNTESS BISMARCK-SCHÖNHAUSEN, Berlin:

Letter of the 3d received, all well. Saarbrücken French invention. Weissenburg truth.

BISMARCK.

5¹

TO COUNT H. BISMARCK.

MAINZ, *August 6, '70.*

MY BELOVED BOY:

Heartfelt thanks for your letter of the day before yesterday, which arrived to-day; where this one will find you, I do not know. We shall go to-morrow morning to the frontier together with the King. Would that I there might meet the dear blue color. The beginning is, with God's blessing, good; may it remain so to the end. Four hundred

¹ Copied from Prince Bismarck's Letters to his Betrothed and Wife, page 579.

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French prisoners passed through here to-day from Weissenburg and 400 through Darmstadt. The withdrawing murderers and incendiaries who set the open town of Saarbrück on fire, like wild Indians, have been reached to-day by Göben, and (Frosard's corps) emphatically put to flight. The same will, with God's help, happen to the main army. From your mother I have good news; both of you put plenty of letters in the mail for her, wherever you can. I hope she will soon go to Nauheim.

Cordial greetings to Bill, and pray God with me and with your mother that he may unite us again happy and well; above all, however, that he may graciously grant us victory.

Your faithful father

V. BISMARCK.

If one of you two should be wounded telegraph me at the King's headquarters as soon as possible. But not your mother first.

TO HIS WIFE

6

Telegram.

MAINZ, *August 7, '70.*

COUNTESS BISMARCK,

Berlin, Wilhelmstrasse 76:

Received a letter just now from Herbert;
all well.

COUNT BISMARCK.

7

HOMBURG, *August 8, '70.*

MY DEAR HEART:

Last evening we arrived here from Mainz by rail. Eigenbrod, who is in advance with the wagons, saw our dragoons near Kaiserslautern and tossed them half a sausage. Provisions short, room worse. I am lying here with Carl, ninety soldiers, and many footmen, in a small house, separated from all the counselors (with and without titles). It is really maddening to see the princely onlookers take up all available space and compel Roon and me to leave our working force behind, so that these sight-seeing Royal High-

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nesses, with their servants, horses, and adjutants, may find room.

I do not understand your quite unchristianlike scolding and complaining letter without a date, which I received here yesterday. I wrote you from Mainz with my own hands three times and telegraphed twice. This one is my fourth letter, and last evening the third telegram went off because of your letter. Via London we hear that they in Paris have become uneasy. Our victories come to them, after the fearful lying and bragging, of course, very much like a surprise. We ourselves here have difficulty in learning how the fighting is exactly taking place; we have about 8,000 prisoners and some forty pieces, without the six mitrailleuses. This even the Frenchmen admit, that our men behave like heroes, *un élan irrésistible*, and, withal, constantly up against steep and protected heights. I must blame them only for scorning death too much, and just for this reason the poor infantry has lost

TO HIS WIFE

so terribly, especially officers, and of them especially staff-officers. In the rivalry between Bavarians and Prussians, or between First, Second, and Third Army Corps, they go on as though it were a race for fun. The Bavarians behave splendidly, just like ours. Our good friend Senfft remained on the field, I believe at Weissenburg. Roon's youngest is slightly wounded in the leg. The cavalry is otherwise less exposed, and is not suffering the twentieth part of the losses of the infantry, which really must accustom itself to a manner less violent than that of the Berserkers when it throws itself upon the enemy, for such fine blood as that of our soldiers is rare in the world. Here is nothing else but sky and Saxons who are furious that they can not get at the enemy.

I embrace you and Marie.

Your most faithful

V. B.

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8

ST. JOHANN, *August 9, '70.*

Saarbrück is still standing after all; it is opposite me on the other side of the river, and behind it the mountains from which seven days ago the French climbed down and shot upon Prussians who were not there, and won a battle without adversary, and over which three days ago they were chased back again. I live with M. Haldy; everything elegant and comfortable, but far from the King, who lies yonder in Saarbrück; I am to dine with him at six, am quite fatigued by the drive from Homburg, and have ten despatches in cipher before me which I can't read as there is no cipher-reader here.

About the children, I have not been able to learn anything as yet, only that they are stationed in the neighborhood of Saarge-münd. God protect them and you and the one with you:

Your

v. B.

TO HIS WIFE

9

ST. JOHANN, *August 11.*

Only two lines of heartfelt greetings
through the courier, on leaving for St.
Avold.

Your

v. B.

ST. AVOLD, 11, *Evening.*

This I wrote this morning, put it in my pocket and therefore did not find it when the army messenger left. When undressing I found it and add now that we all are well and I am at the point of lying down in the bed of M. and Mme. Laity, who, fleeing before us without any reason, left their house this morning.

Your most faithful

v. B.

10

HERNY, *August 14, '70.*

MY DARLING:

A few hours east of Metz in the direction toward Falkenberg you will, perhaps, find on the chart the village where we are to-day,

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but not the many flies which force me to write with a shaking head. I am here in a farmhouse deserted by its tenants; *la voisine* has remained and regaled me yesterday with a fowl which two hours before dinner, while yet alive, had made my acquaintance. My good teeth were unable to do its corpse any harm. I learned, however, that a *civet* of a tame rabbit is very eatable for hungry people, even when its ingredients delighted them an hour before by their lively capers. Besides that I eat, like a healthy person, fried and raw bacon with so much garlic that, it seems to me, my breath is beginning to smell like a saltpeter cellar. All that agrees with me very well, and I should be quite satisfied, if I only could hear a word from Bill and Herbert. The dragoons are always from six to eight miles¹ ahead of us; to-day on the other side of the Mosel, having passed through between Metz and Nancy. May God save the dear boys from sickness and wounds.

¹ German miles are referred to throughout these letters.

TO HIS WIFE

Of the latter there is always less danger in the cavalry. The poor infantry loses terribly, because no troop has ever before acted like it. At Wörth 8,000 men lost; not counting 3,000 missing and scattered, the greater number of which will probably show up again, as the French hardly took any prisoners away upon their retreat when they were hastening in disordered detachments of thousands and mostly without arms, and all sorts of troops, infantry and cavalry, mixed up. The Fifth Division lost at Spichern just 100 officers, of which nineteen were killed immediately. I just now saw a battalion of the Twelfth Regiment (Fifth Division) that had only three officers left; a sergeant acted as adjutant. A corporal said to me: "If we had held the position the French had, the devil himself couldn't have *got* us down; I wonder that we ever *got* it ourselves." It is a pity to lose so many of these heroic souls; it can not be gainsaid, however, that the moral impression upon the French army is so over-

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powering that it will perhaps save us much blood in the future. We can't induce them any more to join battle with us, and have been vainly looking for them these three days. Steinmetz makes himself unpopular by his obstinacy, even dangerous; he is very near an impeachment; only the King opposes it, all the generals demand it. The Crown Prince leaves us without any news. The Bavarian reports are printed in Munich, and from there the Berlin papers get them, and in these we read, in spite of the slow mails, what happens at the Third Army Corps, earlier than in the reports from there to the King. All advancements and decorations are delayed by this, and the French descriptions arrive everywhere a fortnight earlier than ours. Our people behave very well in their quarters.

My watch I suppose you have received. It stopped suddenly in the night; perhaps I broke the spring in winding it up. I beg you to send me another key for it, one with a

TO HIS WIFE

cross-piece or leaf, which one can grasp between the fingers in winding and hold firmly without violence. I bought myself a thick one of silver for ten francs. I also send you twenty-three frederic d'ors; they pass here, notwithstanding, only for napoleons. Received cigars, but I still should like some small good ones for myself. Iron crosses not yet distributed, probably not ready. It is perhaps better so, for after a few have been seen with them it will be absolutely impossible to hold the others back and prevent them from sticking their heads into the mouths of the French cannons; they are, anyhow, like Berserkers. The French think our soldiers are so accustomed to maneuver-shooting that they entirely forget that they are here shot at with bullets! A beautiful recognition of gallantry.

Now farewell, my heart. Embrace our daughter for me and pray with me for our sons.

Your

Y. B.

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11

Telegram.

HERNY, *August 15, 1870.*

Yesterday very sanguinary battle before Metz. Our military authorities now have the impression that this is the beginning of the end of French resistance, and believe that we shall be shortly before Paris.

BISMARCK.

12

Telegram.

Sent FRANKFORT-ON-MAIN, *August 16, 1870, 7.30 P.M.*

FRAU COUNTESS VON BISMARCK:

Herbert and Bill have been seen this morning, very well.

VON BISMARCK.

13

PONT-À-MOUSSON; *August 16.*

MY DARLING:

To be sure I sent you a telegram which tells you that Carl saw a dragoon to-day, who had left Herbert and Bill in full health early this morning, four miles from here, and

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TO HIS WIFE

had seen them both himself. But as it is very doubtful whether telegrams can leave at all, because they cut our wires daily, I write it to you again. The Third and Tenth Corps are fighting just now at Gorze, three miles north from here, against the French, who are falling back from Metz. The latter, a force of four divisions, are being pressed back upon Thionville. If this succeeds, the French army will be so scattered that it can not be gathered again, and the campaign will be practically over, in case the Lord should not unmistakably intervene in behalf of France, which, I am confident, will not happen. The people here must take me for a bloodhound. The old women, when they hear my name, fall upon their knees and beg me for their lives. Attila was a lamb compared with me.

Farewell, my heart. The letter must be mailed.

Your most faithful

V. B.

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14

Telegram.

Sent PONT-À-MOUSSON, *August 17, 1870, 8 P. M.*

FRAU COUNTESS BISMARCK:

I have just spoken with Herbert and Bill; Bill's horse killed, he himself quite well. Herbert harmless shot through the thigh, bone not hurt. He will be taken to me this evening. Then I shall direct him toward Nauheim, that you at last will go there! Phipp¹ well.

BISMARCK.

15

PONT-À-MOUSSON, *August 17.*

MY DARLING:

The main thing I telegraphed you. We were waked up this morning at three o'clock, drove and rode four miles; there I heard accidentally that First Guard Dragoons had many losses. Rode two miles across the country with much questioning and little danger;

¹ Eldest son of the brother and lieutenant of reserve of the First Guard Dragoon Regiment. D. 1894.

TO HIS WIFE

found Herbert with 250 wounded in a tenant's farmhouse, Bill visiting him under pretext of getting himself a new horse. He really found a lean hack. Herbert lay beside Szerdahely (Second Guard Dragoons) and one whose name I can not remember; looked as ever, only two holes in left thigh, in and out shot; wound well dressed. I ordered my carriage, remained four hours waiting for it, and when it came we found that sitting up hurt him, and the heat too great. I let him have Krüger, pressed into service a wagon in which he could lie down and in which he will arrive here some time during the cool night. He also had two grazing shots through his clothes, of which one glanced off my black wooden watch, smashing it. I took it with me and left him my ten-franc watch, which I bought in St. Avoird, instead. The black one I shall bring you and will buy myself a new one here. Bill's horse was shot down in the attack, so that he turned a somersault, and at first was thought dead. But

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he is fat and lusty, looked very smeary. The campaign is now over for Herbert, and he, if God send no other misfortune, under cover against further trouble, for it will take him at least a few weeks to heal up. I will send him by rail direct to Germany. How would it be, if you nursed him in Nauheim? If he does not get the cross, I will never again bear orders. Wesdehlen, Westorp, Reuss, Kleist, remained on the field, Auerswald shot through the abdomen, severe; he also lay there. The three squadrons, who attacked, lost twelve officers, men not yet counted. Every one a hero! The Third Hussars, Thirteenth and Sixteenth Lancers, and my poor yellow Cuirassiers have lost, at the preposterous and impossible cavalry attacks which Voigt-Rheetz commanded, one-third of their men, and all more than half of the officers. I will not be bitter after the Lord has so graciously preserved us our two boys, but the command of the First and Second Army Corps is unskilful in the employ-

TO HIS WIFE

ment of the death-scorning bravery of our men, fist alone, without head; and yet we conquer. But we can not spare so many, especially officers, at the rate we are losing them, if we yet want to reach Paris. It is wasting the best soldiers of Europe. Moltke is good, but Steinmetz no commander. We fought yesterday against a superior force of more than double our number, against a better position, better arms, and gallant enemies, and yet we conquered.

Farewell, my beloved heart; embrace Marie, and fear nothing.

Your
v. B.

Revolver good, horses well, but tired, deadly tired; in the saddle from three to eight in the evening.

16

REZONVILLE, *August 19, Morning.*

Slept well in camp, Guard Dragoons yesterday not to the front, thus everything as

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before; Herbert, I hope, arrived at Pont-à-Mousson last evening. I saw him in Mariaville at about noon, without fever, suppuration beginning. Yesterday from three in the morning to nine in the evening on horseback. French completely beaten. Now we shall investigate closer.

Your

v. B.

To COUNTESS BISMARCK-SCHÖNHAUSEN, Berlin.

17

PONT-À-MOUSSON, *August 19, 1870.*

I have just got back to headquarters at Pont-à-Mousson after an absence of two days, very tired, but well otherwise; I do not write myself, but dictate, because I am eating mutton and potatoes at present. Herbert is lying above in my room; is cheerful, and the best proof of his being well is his smoking resolutely, for which he had no appetite yesterday when I saw him in Mariaville. I got back this morning, after our departure yes-

TO HIS WIFE

terday morning at three o'clock; my letter of yesterday, written at Rezonville, you will receive only now at the same time with this one. Herbert's departure for Germany does not depend upon his condition,—for as far as that goes he could leave to-day,—but upon the finishing of a short stretch of railway, which was interrupted. Therefore go, as soon as you can, to Nauheim, where, by the way, telegraph and railway are as good as in Berlin.

Now ¹ I have finished eating. I was very hungry, as I had not eaten anything warm for two days and have had the past three days only a few hours' time for sleeping; feel excellent; ride five or six miles on Uncle Tom, who is the most uncomfortable of all horses; drink coffee and smoke six cigars a day. May God save you and change your headaches to a merry good health. Two letters from you. Those of 17th and 16th I read, the others² I shall read directly. Many

¹ From here on written by himself.

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of the Guards were left on the field; much too gallant, the splendid men, to live. It moves me to pity, almost more than I rejoice over the victory.

Your most faithful

v. B.

18

P(ONT)-à-MOUSSEON, *August 20.*

Herbert is lying beside me; has slept well just now for four hours; is cheerful and will be able to depart in a few days. Just go to Nauheim and order quarters. Cordial congratulations to the beloved child for to-morrow.

v. B.

19

COMMERCEY, *August 23.*

This morning, taken leave from Herbert in Pont-à-Mousson. Kryn, who dresses his wound, goes with him to-morrow by rail via Nancy, Mannheim to Nauheim, where he hopes to find you. He will travel two days and thus arrive at station Nauheim on

TO HIS WIFE

Thursday or Friday. He was very well and in good mood. I had to get him to-day a pair of trousers, of which he did not possess any. All goes well with me, always on the go and in good health. Cordial greetings Marie.

Your

v. B.

20

BAR-LE-DUC, *August 24.*

MY DEAR HEART:

We are advancing with celerity. To-day noon I gave up pleasant quarters in Com-mercy, with lovable old ladies, tearful wives and mothers of generals, who all want peace. Before us there is no enemy; Chalons and farther on already occupied by us. We shall either fight before Paris or not at all. Napoleon is said to have been in Rheims yesterday. I do not consider it impossible that he begins to carry himself with the idea that he will have to employ his army more against the Parisians than against us, to make peace with us, and, supported by the army, to con-

BISMARCK'S LETTERS

tinue to tyrannize the rest of France. I should not object, but one can not judge at this time whether it be true. The French main army is locked up in Metz by Prince Frederick Charles with 20,000 men; it can no longer be 100,000 strong. In addition there are about 20,000 wounded in Metz down with typhus and gangrene; how much of provisions they have and for how long the future will tell. When they kill the horses, they will begin to think of capitulating.

I left Herbert well yesterday; Fritz,¹ who met me in Commercy, saw him this morning at five o'clock, when he expected to be taken to the railroad at seven; the nurses of the Knights of St. John were all ready for the transport. When you receive this letter you will probably have him with you, as I heard that you would depart yesterday. I am, by the aid of God, well, beyond expectation. I eat, drink, and sleep just like a healthy per-

¹ General Count Bismarck-Bohlen.

TO HIS WIFE

son. May God give you and Marie the same, and a good cure in Nauheim. We shall stay over to-morrow at least.

Your most faithful

v. B.

21

Telegram.

MAINZ, *August 25, 1870, 3.50 P. M.*

COUNTESS VON BISMARCK,

Bath Nauheim:

His Lordship the Count, your son, will arrive there this morning at about seven or eight o'clock; expects attendants and men.

DR. FREY.¹

22

BAR-LE-DUC, *August 25.*

DEAREST HEART:

We march from here to-morrow to St. Ménéhould, in the direction toward Rheims; shall be there without telegraph or railroad, consequently news longer on the way, and

¹ Swiss Volunteer Army Surgeon.

BISMARCK'S LETTERS

therefore I write once more from here, where I should like to stay longer on account of good beds, wine, and fare. I have to announce only that all is well with me, and that we, in consequence of the victories at Metz, are advancing six miles almost every day, without seeing anything of the enemy. His main army remains locked up in Metz by Prince Frederick Charles, and we are yet to see whether we shall find something in Rheims, which has meanwhile gotten on its legs. Napoleon is reported to be there.

Herbert will probably have left Pont-à-Mousson yesterday morning; he will make the journey in about two to four days; it depends upon how he will stand it. So he is, perhaps, with you by the time this letter reaches you. Bill is now with the Dragoons of the Royal Guard a few miles to the left of us. You need not worry about him. A regiment that has suffered as the Dragoons did will not be led into the fire again without pressing need. I have repeatedly searched

TO HIS WIFE

for information about Bülow,¹ and as I could not learn anything about him, I suppose he is well and with his regiment. Itzenplitz is said—and I am sorry for it—to have been left on the field; but do not speak of it, as it is very hard to learn anything positive; it might be an error. I am immeasurably sorry for the old man, if it should be true. Lehndorf told it to me to-day. The regimental reports come in sooner at home than here. But whoever is not reported dead, is, as a rule, alive and unwounded. Good-by, with all my heart; drink and bathe in quiet, trust to God, who shielded our children in the very jaws of death, and greet my beloved Marie.

Your most faithful

v. B.

Birthday of the King of Bavaria, and I without my decorations!

¹ Lieutenant of the Second Guard Dragoons, second son of the later Secretary of State.

BISMARCK'S LETTERS.

23

CLERMONT-EN-ARGONNE, *August 27.*

MY BELOVED HEART:

We thought to find MacMahon not before we get to Chalons; he avoided us and escaped to Rheims. We intended to look for him there, but heard in time that he tried to press forward via Verdun toward Metz, to help liberate the French main army under Bazaine, locked up there. He cut a hook, as they say in hunting, and we, in pursuit, tried to cut him off, in order to force him to stand and fight. MacMahon's troops are of much less capability than Bazaine's; there are many reserves of which a squadron of our Lancers caught 900 yesterday. The above you may communicate to anybody you please, even to the newspapers. We are lying here in a small hole, to be found east of Verdun. I, with the schoolmaster; place of sleeping on the floor; a straw chair, a small pinewood table that serves as washstand,

TO HIS WIFE

desk, and dining-table. Provisions hard to get. The people have nothing left; I have now once more to consider floor, bacon, and ammunition bread as remedies whose efficacy I had never recognized before. Am doing very well on it. Herbert is probably with you; yesterday I received news that he had passed Nancy by railway, accompanied by Colonel Canitz.¹ The duration of his journey depended upon its effect upon his wound. I scented Bill yesterday at St. Ménéhould as being well. Did I tell you that every dragoon of the Third Squadron first laughs when he has to undergo an examination about Bill by me? He has a contagious jollity. May God give it to you also and Marie and a good effect from the water.

Your most faithful

v. B.

Field post much worse than '66! .

¹ The wounded commander of the Second Guards.

BISMARCK'S LETTERS

24

CLERMONT, *August 28.*

Still lying on the floor at the schoolmaster's, otherwise well. Bill seen well yesterday by an officer; he had marched through here an hour before we got to this place. I at last learned yesterday about young Bülow,¹ that he is unwounded and well, telegraphed to Thile² yesterday. I have not had a letter from you from Nauheim. The last one, dated Tuesday from Berlin, I received yesterday through army messenger. I hope you are nursing your old son there by this time. Hans Arnim³ well; saw youngest red Boitze⁴ yesterday, who saw him.

I have written since seven in the morning, it is now three. I must have a little walk before I go to eat at his Majesty's at four.

¹ See former note, p. 31.

² Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs.

³ Son of the sister of the Federal Chancellor.

⁴ Count Arnim-Boitzenburg.

TO HIS WIFE

Heartfelt greetings to both the children.

Your most faithful

v. B.

Bavarians have been marching through here the past four hours; blow false.

25

CLERMONT, *August 28, '70.*

MY BELOVED HEART:

I sent you to-day a pencil-letter hurriedly by army messenger. Now, in the evening, I have time, and my thoughts turn to you. I am writing in advance because I do not know whether there will be time for it in the next few days. I hope that we shall break up to-morrow; we are only expecting certain reports upon which depends the direction we are to take. It is not very nice here with only one rush chair. General Staff with night-service below me, offices with ditto above me, twenty people who live in this thin, sounding house, five screaming children beside me, and not even a — — — — —. One has

BISMARCK'S LETTERS

to get accustomed, in the face of the public, to go about it shamelessly as best possible, and to induce the guards, at least, not to stand there with presented arms. Pardon these details, but it is to me the most unpleasant of the martial deprivations. Since the 19th I have not observed any warlike adventures near me; some political work, a few Saxon cavalry skirmishes, marching and counter-marching, with which we try to make the French stand, that is to say MacMahon. The main army, Bazaine's, is locked up in Metz, and we have to prevent the other under MacMahon from liberating it. Hence the march from Bar-le-Duc to this place, and perhaps still farther north. These strategical operations are of minor immediate interest to you out there than the battles, but they prepare the fate of the latter. This rainy weather affects the infantry boots badly, and this is just as important a question as a battle; in the marching capacity also, the Germans prove themselves superior to the French, who

TO HIS WIFE

are known for their light-footedness; and we are not only provided with better foot-wear than the adversary, but also have better legs sticking in it. I must now to the King to tea, in order to help him live through the long evening; to-morrow I shall add a few lines, provided we do not start too early. I shall learn that at the King's.

GRANDPRÉ, 29.

This morning there was no time for writing; we started at eight to meet MacMahon, but when we were at breakfast half-way to Varennes (where they stopped Louis XVI seventy-nine years ago), it was reported that the bird had flown away, withdrawing northwest. Well, I suppose we have to follow them, until the sea at Boulogne or Dieppe puts a limit to their retreat. It is tiresome to run after these Frenchmen, in spite of the charming landscape. We can not afford to get out of touch with them, lest they help the real army (Bazaine) locked up

BISMARCK'S LETTERS

in Metz to escape. This hunting is for us something like a game of blind man's buff, as we continually have to find out by way of feeling through the cavalry what has become of the adversary. What really has become of my watch? A policeman lent me his, which does not repeat, and then I think every time I awake from the noise that it is not worth while to go to sleep again. It is a little more promising out here than in Clermont; I have a bedstead at least, and no more bottle-necks for candlesticks.

Meanwhile I ate with the King, then drank some native sparkling wine which is not served at table, with our gentlemen whom I found, on my return, still at table, and now shall finish with cordial greetings to both the children. Bill still not ensign, because of no proposals from the regiment having been returned.

Your most faithful

v. B.

TO HIS WIFE

26

VENDRESSE, *August 31, '70.*

MY DEAR HEART:

Yesterday at last we touched them, a little south of Sedan, which you will find situated on the Maas [Meuse], upon any map. They either did not think us so near or believed themselves stronger. In short, we overtook them, south of Beaumont. Justav¹ with the Fourth Corps and our brave Twenty-sixth and Sixty-sixth ran over two French divisions, one after the other. Beside them the Eighty-sixth (Holstein) and Thirty-first, the Nordhäuser Chasseurs, on the left wing the Saxons, then the Bavarians and Würtembergers. Justav did the hardest work with the good Schönhausers. The chase extended over two miles; sometimes they made a stand again and rolled with their mitrail-leuses, as though an engine lets out steam. So far eleven of these not very effective murder-instruments have been reported as

¹ General von Alvensleben.

BISMARCK'S LETTERS

captured and some twenty pieces, about 7,000 prisoners, of which, however, continuously new columns by the hundred are brought in. I saw over 1,000 of them at Beaumont upon one spot, penned up in a quarry, among them a priest who is said to have shot upon our wounded. I had his priestly coat at least quickly taken off of him, and, if charges proved, he will join the order of the cordiliers,—but around the neck. Our good cousin of Briest, the captain of the Twenty-sixth, I hear has remained on the field, badly wounded he will be at any rate; the latter is also true of the fat colonel who so long commanded the Twenty-sixth, and two years ago attended the family gathering. A son of the road guard at Fischbeck greeted me, lightly wounded in his arm. I left him what money I had with me. Of the end of the pursuit on the other side of the Maas and below Sedan we have no news as yet. But 15,000 men the French will surely have lost, and the armies of MacMahon and

TO HIS WIFE

Failly are completely routed. Napoleon, father and son, were likewise with the troops; we saw the suite from afar through our field-glasses. The dragoons were not in the fight. I am physically as well as I have been for a long time. With regard to business, yet uncertain. Gorchakoff is less pliable than his Emperor.

Cordial greetings to the children.

Your

v. B.

27¹

VENDRESSE, *September 3, '70.*

MY DEAR HEART:

The day before yesterday before daybreak I left my quarters here, am returning to-day, and meantime witnessed the great battle of Sedan on the 1st, in which we took nearly 30,000 prisoners and threw the rest of the French army, which we had been chasing since the time at Bar-le-Duc, into the fortress

¹ Published in Fürst Bismarcks Briefe an seine Braut und Gattin, p. 579.

BISMARCK'S LETTERS

where it, together with the Emperor, had to surrender. Yesterday morning at five o'clock, after I had been negotiating with Moltke and the French generals till one o'clock in the morning with regard to the capitulation to be effected, General Reille, with whom I am acquainted, woke me to tell me that Napoleon wished to speak to me. I rode unwashed and without breakfast toward Sedan, found the Emperor stopping on the road before Sedan in an open carriage with three adjutants and three on horseback beside it. I dismounted, greeted him just as politely as at the Tuileries, and asked his commands. He wished to see the King; I told him according to truth that his Majesty had his quarters three miles away at the place where I am now writing. Upon Napoleon's asking whither he should betake himself, I offered him, as I was unfamiliar with the country, my quarters at Donchery, a small place on the Maas near by Sedan; he accepted, and drove escorted by his six

TO HIS WIFE

Frenchmen, myself and Carl, who had followed me meanwhile, through the lonely morning toward our side. Shortly before the place he began to regret on account of a possible crowd of people, and he asked me whether he could stop at a lonely workman's house on the way. I had it examined by Carl, who reported it to be poor and unclean. *N'importe*, said Napoleon, and I climbed with him a shaky, narrow flight of stairs. In a room ten feet square, with a pine table and two rush chairs, we sat one hour; the others remained down-stairs. A powerful contrast to our last meeting of '67 at the Tuileries! Our conversation was constrained, for I did not wish to touch upon things which must painfully affect the man, thrown down by God's powerful hand. I had officers brought from town by Carl and requested Moltke to come. We then sent one of the first upon a reconnoitering tour and discovered a small castle with park one-half mile away at Fresnois. Thither I accompanied him with an

BISMARCK'S LETTERS

escort, brought up in the meantime, of the Body-Cuirassier Regiment, and there we concluded the capitulation with the French General-in-Chief Wimpffen, by force of which from 40,000 to 60,000 Frenchmen—I don't know yet exactly how many—with all that they carry about them, become our prisoners. Yesterday and the day before cost France 100,000 men and an emperor. The latter left this morning with all his courtiers, horses, and equipages for Wilhelms-höhe, near Kassel.

It is a world-historical event, a victory for which we will thank God our Lord in humbleness, and one which decides the war, though we have to continue the latter against the monarchless France. I must close. With heartfelt joy I learned to-day from your and Marie's letters of Herbert's arrival. I spoke to Bill yesterday, as telegraphed before, and embraced him, before his Majesty, bending down from my horse while he stood drawn up straight in line. He is very well and

TO HIS WIFE

cheerful. I saw Hans and Fritz Carl, both Bülow's with the Second Guard Dragoons, well and fresh.

Good-by, my heart; greet the children.

Your

V. B.

28

VENDRESSE, *September 3.*

MY HEART:

As there is another courier going to-day, I will send you two more words, through him, that you may know that we shall depart to-morrow for Vouziers, in the direction toward Rheims. MacMahon's army, which we attacked at Beaumont-Mouzon (Justav) four days ago, amounted then to 120,000 men. Of it nothing has been left. About 30,000 may have been wounded or killed in fights, some have been dispersed to Belgium and then disarmed, the rest captured. At the same time the enemy was beaten by the First and Ninth Corps at Metz on the 31st and 1st, in two attempts to break through,

BISMARCK'S LETTERS

and locked up again in Metz. Sixty to 80 thousand French soldiers are reported to be there yet, the only remainder of the whole army with which the war was begun. It is hoped they also will soon be obliged to capitulate. The lies of the Parisian journals about the everlasting victories will probably then cease. I mounted my horse yesterday morning at six, dismounted at midnight, after having ridden ten to eleven miles, twice wet and dry again, and nothing warm to eat the last three days. When I, at said midnight, happened across a pot-roast, I ate of it like a wolf, then slept fast for six hours. And now I feel as well as a fish in water, and, what is still more wonderful, so does Röschen, who had received no feed or water during eighteen hours and had made those eleven miles under me on bad roads, in darkness and rain; she ate immediately with good appetite. Josef,¹ I am sorry to say, has a sort of dysentery; I am afraid he

¹ Footman.

TO HIS WIFE

will be obliged to stay behind somewhere. I have a hussar orderly meanwhile in his place. Napoleon will sleep to-night in Neuf-château in Belgium.

Good night, many greetings.

Your

v. B.

29

Telegram.

Sent PONT-À-MOUSSON, *September 5, '70, 11.20 A. M.*

COUNTESS BISMARCK, Nauheim:

I have seen Bill, well and cheery in camp before Sedan on the 2d.

BISMARCK.

30

RHEIMS, September 5.

Just dismounted. I hear that a courier is ready to leave, and write in haste that I and others are well. I wrote you from Donchery that I saw Bill well in camp last Friday. We shall probably stay here in Rheims for a few days. Many greetings.

Your

v. B.

47

BISMARCK'S LETTERS.

31

RHEIMS, *September 6.*

Only one word, my heart, that I am well. Now that the arms are resting for a few days the paper business is rising over my head so that I have not a moment's time left. I had a very satisfactory interview with the Crown Prince in Donchery to-day. In Paris, republic; at least provisional government by republicans. It is all *sausage* to me.*

Your most faithful

v. B.

*We get there just the same!

32¹

TO COUNT H. BISMARCK.

RHEIMS, *September 7, '70.*

MY BELOVED BOY:

The King told me to-day at table that you were appointed an officer, Bill an ensign.

¹ Published in Fürst Bismarcks Briefe an seine Braut und Gattin, p. 233.

TO HIS WIFE

You have one of the appointed ones ahead of you on the list, his name is Behr, I believe; then you, then Dohna and a number of others. I am glad that you have become this on the field, and after so brilliant a deed of the regiment as that of the 16th. May God give you many years to remember it with thankfulness for his grace that preserved you both in this blood-bath. The other ministers have not been so fortunate with their sons; about Itzenplitz, you know, Roon's good long Bombshell was shot through the abdomen in his battery on the field, rifle bullet, died on the 3d, in the evening. My poor old Roon is really ill with grief and is in bed; he told me that Leonhardt also had lost a son. Few families at home will be without mourning. In Paris the republic has been declared; whether it will stand, how it will develop, for that we have to wait. My wish would be, that we let the people there stew in their own gravy a while and that we settle down in domestic

BISMARCK'S LETTERS

style in the conquered departments, before we go ahead. If we do it too soon, we shall prevent them from quarreling among themselves. Internal peace can not last long with this quite socialistic crowd at the head. Above all I would that our reserves arrived soon. The regiments have not yet even received recruits for the losses suffered at Wörth, and at home everything is ready, I suppose. There is much antiquated red tape in these matters and much scribbling. Bazaine is making frequent sorties out of Metz, one to-day; about the particulars of to-day we are yet in expectancy, as the wire at Clermont has been cut again. Soon, however, he will be obliged to capitulate like Sedan. On the 1st and 2d we took about 90,000 prisoners, sixty generals and about 6,000 officers, or people in officer's rank. Strassburg has been willing to capitulate if free retreat be granted, but we do not wish to let them have the 16,000 or 18,000 men that are in there. May God protect you, my old boy,

TO HIS WIFE

and give you soon your leg again. Cordial greetings.

Your faithful father,

v. B.

33

RHEIMS; *Saturday, the 10th of September, '70.*

The courier must be off, while I am in conference with General v. Boyen and President Delbrück, which I can not interrupt. I am therefore able only to answer the letter, received to-day through courier, with the assurance that I am well and happy, and that everything is going well. I have just returned with the King from a visit to the former much-talked-about French camp at Chalons, where we found the splendidly appointed apartments of the Emperor and Empress devastated by the populace. I call attention to a report from me about my meeting with the Emperor of the 2d of September which will appear in the *Staats-Anzeiger*.

BISMARCK'S LETTERS

With¹ thanks to Abeken, who wrote so far, and cordial greetings.

Your

v. B.

34

RHEIMS, *September 12, '70.*

MY BELOVED HEART:

To-day two months ago I left Varzin for Berlin; what a piece of history has intervened since, and what has become of the Spanish Succession, about which we had to cipher and decipher so much with Bucher! I just remembered it in writing the date. Your last letter of the 3d is lying before me, received yesterday. Blixen-Finecke is my guest from Copenhagen and Sweden, formerly married to a Rumpenheim princess, who presented you with Guava rum, apples, and other things in Frankfort. Be kind to the Rabenaus. They are good people and political friends. Commend me to Emmi Below

¹ In his own handwriting from here on.

TO HIS WIFE

when you see her. An enclosure from Eisen-decher was not in your letter. The one from Westphal I answered; regret the loss through the rain. I am sincerely sorry about Schreckenstein, but don't tell him that, but speak only of my sympathy and my joy over his brave endurance. Beps¹ is doing well, so I hear, the gallant blade! He is, I hear, on the road to speedy recovery. Herbert's wound is surely mitrailleuse, else the bullets would not have set so close upon him and the horse, and it would heal quicker. The mitrailleuse bullets all seem to have a poisonous admixture that at first blackens and irritates the wound. How Bill is to-day I do not know, but he has not had to do any fighting since Sedan. We have been here eight days in order to give the great army time to execute its long wheeling evolutions from Sedan to Paris. About the day after to-morrow we shall proceed. I do not believe that we shall have any battles near or in Paris.

¹ Lieutenant-Colonel von Puttkammer, Second Guards.

BISMARCK'S LETTERS

The diplomatic mail has piled up again here during the martial rest, the dammed-up ink-brook has poured itself out over me, false doves of peace buzz around and coo at me hypocritically, but above all the administrative organization causes me much friction, on account of the incredible pig-headedness and departmental jealousy of the military, especially in the General Staff, the Post, Telegraph, and Quartermaster's affairs. If I had to keep house with such departmental confusion in my civil affairs, I should have exploded long ago like a grenade. But here nobody cares whether the whole suffers or not, every one does what he is ordered to do, and, about what he is not ordered to do, he consoles himself like the boy for whom his father did not buy any gloves. Before the enemy we are nothing but heroes, but at our writing-tables we are like the famous rat king, only grown together by our pig-tails. Hatzfeld and Carl are just coming from Chalons, where they searched the pre-

TO HIS WIFE

fecture. Paul¹ behaves very well, bears everything that comes along with equanimity, is always obliging, and a more useful young man than one would have been led to believe. Cordial greetings to the children, Schrecks and Cilchen, and bathe like a good child and breathe the strengthening morning air.

Your most faithful

v. B.

(Enclosed was found the following slip by the hand of the Countess Bismarck, with the marginal notes by the hand of the Chancellor):

I would that Carl kindly inform me of Billchen's (little Billy's) address, as I do not know it at present.* And please:

Is it settled that the first condition of peace is: eternal remaining of L(ouis) N(apoleon) upon the throne of the French??

*It changes every day; I do not know it myself to-day. The troops are on the advance, you know.

¹ Count Hatzfeld.

BISMARCK'S LETTERS

35

MEAUX, *September 18, '70.*

MY BELOVED HEART:

If I do not write so industriously now as formerly, do not believe that I think less often of you; it is business that is growing above my head, since the peace; not doves, but vultures, are beginning to hack at me, and the administration of the occupied stretches of land is swelling the stream of ink that is ever flowing toward me. In spite of it I found time yesterday, when I heard that the Guard Cavalry was encamped in the neighborhood, to ride across the country and to look up our young shoot of an ensign and to find him finally in Montgé, two miles northwest from here. I brought him cigars and cognac, found him well, strong, and grown almost slender but not slim. Philipp is here to-day; he has the Cross, and I declined his Majesty's invitation to dine with my nephew. Bill's adventure of the 16th is

TO HIS WIFE

not quite as I wrote before. His horse was not shot under him, but stumbled fifty paces before the hostile square over another one, shot before him. Bill on his feet again led his horse away by the bridle in a shower of bullets, under God's protection, but not before he had put a wounded dragoon that had fallen beside him into his (Bill's) own saddle. Neither he on foot nor his comrade on horseback received another of all the bullets that were sent after them, but the horse so many that it fell dead after Bill had led it with his saved comrade out of the fire. He showed himself intrepid and a good fellow. I thank God that he let me live to experience this joy over both boys, and yet preserved them to us. His graciousness, I hope, will rest upon them and us also in the future. Kiss and give my regards to the Lieutenant and his sister.

Your most faithful

v. B.

BISMARCK'S LETTERS

36

FERRIÈRES; *September 21.*

MY DARLING:

I am sitting here under the portrait of old Rothschild and his Lady: am well, so is Bill, but can write only in flying haste. Negotiations of all sorts hold me by my coat-tails as Jews the broker in the market, and the courier must leave in a minute. We go hungry because H. M. has forbidden foraging for headquarters, and there is nothing to buy. Cordial greetings.

Your

v. B.

37¹

TO COUNT H. BISMARCK.

FERRIÈRES; *September 23, '70.*

To-day eight years ago, methinks, I became Minister.

MY BELOVED BOY:

I received, to-day, two letters from your mother of the 15th and 16th, from which I

¹ Published in the sixth volume of the Bismarck Jahrbuch, p. 234.

TO HIS WIFE

gather with grief that your wound is not doing well. You have had a hard year of physical sufferings, but in spite of all I thankfully praise the Lord's protection, that he let you, as it is, survive the ride of the regiment of the 16th of August, for it was not granted to many to tell that they had been there. With God's help your leg will not be stiff, but the flexibility will be for a long time somewhat rusty, the physicians say; the tearing of the muscles was too great, the renewal of tissue and its learning how to move will progress slowly. Roon's wound was a lighter one; in spite of it we shall, as God will, yet have many a ride together through the forest of Varzin. No more riding here, the Crown Prince wishes to let you know. He was with me when I received the letters, and to whom I read the maternal lamentations. What there is left here to do, if there is anything else but starving them out, will be attended to by the infantry and artillery.

BISMARCK'S LETTERS

That I visited Bill at Meaux in quarters and found him well, you at home will probably know by this time. I received the letters addressed to him, and forwarded them; also received the one from Malle. The offense with regard to Wilhelmshöhe I understand; kitchen, stable, and liveries were sent from Berlin against the King's wishes, and Napoleon thereupon quickly dismissed and sold his own, in order to save. A well-treated Napoleon, however, will be more useful to us, and that is the only and most important thing to me. Vengeance is God's. The Frenchmen must remain in the dark, whether they will get him back or not; that will improve their quarrels. They had already begun night before last to hit each other in the streets of Paris with artillery. It is not our duty to pacify them against us. Tell Mama that I agree with her about the advancement of money to the Mesendorfer village magistrate and beg not to remind him of the loan.

TO HIS WIFE

So far I have three times negotiated here by the hour with the French (Favre accompanied, very meekly, by Ring and Hall), but they still get the gripes so severely about Alsace that we had to break off. They believe they will be able to pay five thousand millions of francs and seem to be ready, if we let them keep Strassburg. But I told them we would speak later about the money; first fix the German frontier and make it tight. For as soon as they should get strong enough they would attack us again, I said, which they denied under the most pompous protestations of peace. All that has happened before. But what has not yet happened is your quick and complete recovery, which I wish you, my heart's own boy, and for which I pray to God, and with thousand greetings to Mama and Marie.

Your faithful father,

v. B.

BISMARCK'S LETTERS

38

FERRIÈRES, *September 27.*

MY DEAR HEART:

I have had great joy, first, over Herbert's lead-pencil letter, for which I cordially thank the old boy, and then, to-day, over the letter from the Swiss doctor, the tenor of which was so satisfying, but showed me also how dangerous the situation had been a fortnight ago. You probably experienced genuine fear, remembering Bonn, my darling, and kept silent so bravely toward me. Worry came to me during the nights, as it was, but I kept myself quite nerved, in which I hardly should have succeeded if I had received worse news. I almost become uneasy now, after all is over, as is your habit, but will not spoil myself the joyous gratitude to God. Malle telegraphs much worried about Hans. I immediately sent out Leberström¹ to find out where he is lying and whether he is well.

¹ Mounted policeman.

TO HIS WIFE

He can not be back before to-morrow. Five miles from here he will only learn where the regiment is located. At the same time I shall hear from Bill, about whom I received good news the day before yesterday. He has now taken his horse from me, after I have nursed it back to health. Cordial greeting to his brother and sister.

Your

v. B.

39

FERRIÈRES, *October 1, '70.*

MY DEAR HEART:

For two months we have been lying now in the field, and I nearly a fortnight in Old Rothschild's green damask; this latter part of the adventure commences to have its length; my existence is very monotonous; much scribbling about German, Prussian, and French business; great heat during the day, nights cooler. Very inconveniently, my free time mostly coincides with the mid-day heat, when I sit, more than walk, for

BISMARCK'S LETTERS

exercise. In getting up early I do not succeed easily, and therefore my day is short. Yesterday we celebrated her M(ajesty)'s birthday with congratulations at ten in the morning, then a sleeked-up dinner, with princes and Decorations. That sort of thing is wearing, because I have to talk carefully with the gentlemen, and politely. Three days ago I shot a few pheasants; but the thing was unsatisfactory, too small a rifle with short butt-end and only nine cartridges to be found; shot also too small. Otherwise they, that is to say birds, are here in abundance. In a few days we are to remove to Versailles. A few French made a sortie yesterday out of Paris, attacked the Sixth Corps, lost 600 prisoners and then asked for an armistice to bury their dead, which was granted for two hours. They in Metz will probably make another sortie in these days, as they are building bridges over the Mosel. We have time and are looking about for winter quarters, and then I hope to find time to visit you. Re-

TO HIS WIFE

ceived good news from Bill yesterday. Both the good boys ought to have the Cross, but likewise every dragoon who was in it at the 16th of August. After Phipp has received it, who deserves it as well as anybody and received it through the officers' vote, there is little hope for our poor boys, because the name would be too frequent on the list. Phipp is, without that, put to my account by people who show that they do not know better, when they congratulate me; and I myself wear it certainly unmerited, but can not give it back to the King, I am sure. The fat colonel, if he is alive, and the captain of Briest probably have it also. I should like to give mine to one of the boys if I could. Cordial greetings.

Your

V. B.

40

VERSAILLES, *October 8, '70.*

MY DARLING:

If I am not any more the industrious correspondent of the first weeks, be not angry

BISMARCK'S LETTERS

with me. The ink-wave of business has overtaken me upon my journey, and pours over me so that I hate the well from which it springs, and have little time left to let you have that which belongs to you. Your letter of the 2d I received to-day; I learned from it with much grief through what anxiety you have passed on account of Herbert. After these troubles we will not embitter our gratefulness to God for his gracious protection by complaining over trifles. It is a great thing to have two sound sons with all four limbs left from that cavalry fight, and, when I think of Bonn and Mars-la-Tour, I allow, in the hope of seeing them both well again after the war, no other feeling but warm thanks to God to rise in me. For all of that, I have seen too many thousands of corpses and cripples, and admired too much heroism that dropped in unrecognized modesty into death and oblivion. Every one of the dragoons, that rode with our boys, has earned the Cross, and we all here in headquarters walk

TO HIS WIFE

around with it without shame or worry; and in the Guard Cavalry the crosses were not distributed according to experience but according to the regiments. For instance, four for the First G(uard) Dragoons, as many for the Guards du Corps, who certainly would have fought just as bravely as the dragoons if they only had been given the chance, but who got under fire only at Sedan, had two wounded there, and now decorate these two and two other brave men with their four crosses. It is little the King's fault; he does according to the application of the division (Goltz), and the dragoons had nobody to apply for them, because their staff officers and colonels were dead. I for my part can not demand anything for my sons; they both have earned it, without doubt. But now enough of it. My telegram of the 3d about Bill being well, I presume you have received. He surprised me in bed on the 2d, dressed in Blumenthal's uniform and somebody else's trousers. To that he hung Carl's reserve

BISMARCK'S LETTERS

cartouche, assumed my general's helmet, incorrect only on the top, and thus I took him to church, where he reported to his Majesty, who did not say anything about the outfit. At table we drank Sec, bought from Rothschild's cellar, until your son had a red saddle upon his nose, and then he rode again with Phipp via Lagny and Claye back to his quarters three miles away, not without having taken my gold out of my vest pocket and two pairs of gloves; also provided with cognac and cigars. The following day Gerhard, sent from Rheims, and Dachröden and Jagow, who announced Bill's happy return, ate with us. Lehndorf is still lame, through a fall in Clermont, five weeks ago, but is in good humor with all his suffering. He can walk again, on a stick, however. The weather has changed to-day to rain, but has become warmer than it used to be during those sunny weeks, from five in the evening to eight in the morning. I fled the botheration to-day, in order to gallop

TO HIS WIFE

Röschen for an hour in the soft and quiet autumn air through Louis XIV long and straight park avenues, through rustling foliage and cut hedges, passing by quiet mirror-like ponds and marble gods, and hearing nothing more human than Joseph's rattling cavalry sabre; all to give way to homesickness, which the falling leaves and the solitude in strange lands bring about, with childish memories of clipped hedges which are no more. This pleasure I shall probably give myself daily in the deserted royal garden, rain or shine, to escape the peacemaking diplomatists. The letters, I am sorry to say, can not be escaped. The ones from Berlin are often more annoying than those from abroad,—elections for the Diet and Papal complaints, German constitution, and personal quarrels in Alsace-Lorraine or Rheims, where the Grand Duke of Schwerin is now governor and Gerhard with him. Russia behaves very amiably; England, except for the trade in arms, not so bad; Beust uncertain

BISMARCK'S LETTERS

as ever, and our American friends do not exactly know, now that France has become a republic, with which side of their faces they should smile more benignantly. They love us just as much as ever, but republic! They are unable now to hate the Frenchman. The Badeners who are on their way to us from Strassburg cut down about 1,000 guerrillas, at Raon-l'Etape on the Meurthe, and Bazaine moved with his whole force out of Metz toward the north, but was thrown into the place again, losing from 5,000 to 6,000 men. We lost 800 men in the affair; now our men, there as well as here, stand behind breastworks, and the Frenchmen have got to come to them across a plain, and so lose more. All the ladies here, where I have seen the first woman again in two months, dress in black, be it for national or family mourning. There are, indeed, probably more here than with us that have reason for mourning. I enjoyed Herbert's pencil-letter very much, and thank him sincerely, although I am sorry

TO HIS WIFE

that his poor leg can't as yet carry him. Cordial greetings to him and to my dear Marie; also express my sympathy and my wishes to Schreck,¹ and kiss Cilchen heartily for me.

Your most faithful

V. B.

41

VERSAILLES, *October 20, '70.*

21. I lost one day which I have not yet found.

MY DEAR HEART:

I am quite conscience-stricken by my irregularity in writing; you must put a few letters of August, when business had not yet gotten hold of me, to the account of the present letterless time. I am every day a few hours short, and from to-morrow on it will be still worse, as the Ministers of the South German States will arrive to sit in council over the new 1,000-year Empire. I post-

¹ Major von Schreckenstein, of the King's Hussar Regiment, who lay sick in Nauheim. D. 1875.

BISMARCK'S LETTERS

poned it every day till evening, and was then so tired that I thought there would be time when I had finished sleeping; then in the morning the pile of telegrams is there again. This noon I was just ready to begin when the alarm signals were given; sortie from Mont Valérien, four hours on horseback; heard much gun-firing and saw grenades burst in a distance of sure range; back hungry, and now after dinner so much to read and write again, and to discuss by way of mouth, that it will be soon twelve, and I commence to flirt with my bed. I telegraphed you in instalments that everything is all right; therefore, until to-morrow.

22d. I sleep well, but never enough. Yesterday came your letter of the 18th; you are so industrious that I am ashamed of myself, but it is, indeed, the only handwriting which gives me pleasure, when it comes, and also that from the children, of course. Thank Herbert for his letter.

As far as this I had got this morning, and

TO HIS WIFE

now it is again midnight. Delbrück, Ben-
nigsen, King, papers, reading and writing
telegrams and despatches, and the gentle-
men of the army make my business terribly
hard for me. They snatch it unto them-
selves, spoil it, and I am the one who is re-
sponsible for it all afterward.

23d. I cut off what I wrote in midnight
wrath, as the mail certainly sometimes falls
into the enemy's hands, and then my com-
plaints might become public accusations.
To-day, Sunday morning, I will not return to
this theme anyhow.

It is raining autumn-like, not very cold,
but unpleasant enough for camping. Has
Bill undervests and things of that sort? Give
Herbert the money which he wants for his
outfit, and for a good horse. It is a question,
though, whether he would not buy better
here; sometimes at least it has been done.
About Bill's necessities in the way of outfit I
have heard nothing. He has one horse, one he
gets furnished, and all the rest he will have

BISMARCK'S LETTERS

ordered in Berlin on tick. Ask him about it when you write him, that you may pay the bill. The people, I suppose, have urgent need for ready money at present, the tailors, etc. Presumably this will last yet awhile before Paris. I do not know whether the generals of the staff had different intentions formerly or what, but the siege guns are not here, and before November, probably, we shall not put a shot upon the fortifications. On the other hand, I expect to-day and to-morrow many Ministers from Bavaria, Würtemberg, Baden, Hessen, Saxony, in addition to Frenchmen of all parties. Where the time is to be found for them, besides all the other tormentors that are here already, is certainly a matter of conjecture. I beg Herbert to be careful about his riding and not to feel well too soon. The wound was too serious for that. His regiment is lying quiet in Villette, near Mitry, drilling and riding remountings, on rainy days. There is nothing to do for the cavalry, at present, excepting

TO HIS WIFE

occasional patrols. My cordial greetings to him and Marie. I can not keep the courier any longer. Good-by. May God take care of you all.

Your

v. B.

42

Telegram.

VERSAILLES, *October 22, '70.*

COUNTESS BISMARCK-SCHÖNHAUSEN, Berlin:

Both letters up to the 18th received; all well, much work.

BISMARCK.

43

Telegram.

Sent VERSAILLES, *October 27, '70, 3.30 P. M.*

COUNTESS BISMARCK:

Metz capitulated to-day, 150,000 prisoners, among them 4,000 officers and 20,000 wounded. Here all well.

v. BISMARCK.

44

VERSAILLES, *October 28-29.*

MY DARLING:

It is indeed past twelve and I have just ended my early-started discussions, useful

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BISMARCK'S LETTERS

and silly ones. I also sent you a telegram from Metz yesterday, but as I shall not get up so early to-morrow as when the courier leaves, I must to-day, late as it is, put my indignation on paper about the idea that had been brought to you and printed in many papers, namely, that I hindered the play of our artillery against Paris and thus was the cause of the prolongation of the war. Weeks ago I hoped, every morning, to be awakened by the cannonade. Over 200 are planted already, but they do not shoot, and are not even to take Paris as the target but only a few forts. There is an intrigue hanging over the whole thing, contrived by women, archbishops, and savants. Well-known influences in high quarters are said to be at play, that the laudations from abroad and the incense of hollow phrases should not suffer. Everybody complains of obstacles of an anonymous nature, and says the transports of artillery are being held back on the railroads, that they may not arrive in time. An-

TO HIS WIFE

other scolds the want of earlier preparations. A third says that there was not sufficient ammunition. A fourth, the armament incomplete. A fifth, that everything was there except the order to shoot. With all that, the men are freezing and falling sick, the war dragging on, the neutrals are mixing themselves up with what concerns us only, because they think time is getting long, and France is arming herself with hundreds of thousands of guns from England and America. All this I am preaching every day, and then the people insist that I am the culprit in this dragging on of the war, which will be the death of many an honest soldier, only to be praised by the other countries for saving "civilization." Please contradict this lie to everybody, and give my greetings to our children. Tell Herbert not to be in a hurry. It is one thing to ride two hours for pleasure and quite another to be stuck on to the soldier's caparison. There is no use now for the cavalry, anyhow; the regiment is lying

BISMARCK'S LETTERS

idle in Villette-aux-aulnes, and is going to remain there till peace is made or springtime. I am well. Many Ministers. We probably shall call the Reichstag hither at the end of November (20) with Federal Council and Congress of Princes.

Your

v. B.

45

VERSAILLES, *November 3.*

MY LOVE:

The last three days daily three hours' tête-à-tête with Thiers, and no armistice will come of it in spite of all. They want to have everything, but grant nothing. My evenings are to be taken up by the German Ministers, in between H. M. and papers and telegrams, but I am well, under the circumstances; also Bill. Cordial greetings.

Your

v. B.

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TO HIS WIFE

46

Telegram.

VERSAILLES, *November 8, '70*, 10.14 A. M.

FRAU COUNTESS VON BISMARCK:

Bill and Philipp are here on a three days' furlough. All well.

BISMARCK.

47 ¹

TO COUNT H. BISMARCK.

VERSAILLES, *November 12, '70*.

MY BELOVED BOY:

I thank you for your letter, and understand and sympathize with your chagrin over your removal to the depot squadron. I should have been too glad if you had come, but I am too superstitious a father to do anything toward it, and take these things as God ordains them. You are there more useful, as far as the service is concerned, than here. Your regiment is still in Tremblay and neigh-

¹Published in the sixth volume of the *Bismarck-Jahrbuch*, p. 236.

BISMARCK'S LETTERS

borhood, drilling and riding, seldom having the excitement of a transport of prisoners. Bill was here three days ago, together with Phipp. Seven miles of bad road, back and forth; both fat and bored; inspected castle and garden and sneaked about between street and breakfast. You are not losing much here, even the French stopped shooting ninety-three thaler balls into the sky, and ours have not yet their ammunition. What influences those are that hinder its arrival! Well, I have my thoughts about it, but do not write them down. But my ink-dabblers maneuver day and night and intrigue after the manner of former days in Frankfort. If a German thunderstorm is not to burst upon them, these diplomatists and bureaucrats of the old school will never make any headway, at least not this year. We lose nothing in waiting. I received two dear letters from your mother to-day at the same time, and thank her much for the psalms and love. Enclosed I send her a few leaves of a bouquet

TO HIS WIFE

which a petty officer of the Forty-seventh brought me yesterday from the outposts, drawn up as if on duty, announcing that the flowers were picked for me by his Silesians under the French fire. To-day at ten I was awakened by the Eighty-second a little early, yet pleasantly, with a serenade, Nassovians and Hessians. The soldier has lots for me in his heart. The princes, I suppose, have roses not without thorns, but, I am sorry to say, lots of time, that costs me mine. Cordial greetings to Mama and Marie.

Your faithful father,

v. B.

The conversations with Thiers were really animating. He is by far the most charming Gaul whose acquaintance I have made, but from the first word I never for a moment counted upon an armistice; but he did. His wishes deceive him about his compatriots in Paris, who would have almost stoned him. We have time, until they have eaten their

BISMARCK'S LETTERS

dogs and those beautiful long-haired cats. Perhaps it will not be necessary for us to shoot, since it has not been done so far.

Enclosure (as the wrapping of the leaves from the bouquet):

PROGRAM.

Parma March.....von Budik
Fest Ouverture.....Hamburger
Studentenlust.....Strauss
Frühlingserwachen, Lied ohne
Worte.....Bach
The Pauline, Polka concertante.Sachse

48

VERSAILLES, *November 16, '70.*

MY DEAR HEART:

Delbrück leaves to-morrow and I should gladly accompany him, to derive, from the Reichstag, at least, the profit of seeing you again. But I dare not leave here. The air is so laden again with attempts at meddling reconciliations and quarrels among the neu-

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TO HIS WIFE

tral powers, which threaten to leap over into ours, and so many images of princely fancy about Germany are haunting headquarters that I can not leave his Majesty, hard as it is for me to deny myself a change in my treadmill work. I very seldom leave my working-room; hardly ever the garden, as there is not every day time or weather for riding. I see almost nobody but our counselors and servants, the King, when reporting to him, and consulting Ministers. I hardly remember a time so barren of diversion, spiced only by visits of exalted gentlemen whose political chimeras I combat. But I will gladly bear everything if God only will give a good ending this side and on the other side of the Rhine. The German affairs cause most work. Of the latter Delbrück takes the larger share of the load upon himself, but he can not take the princes from me, neither the Europeans. And besides that, the Reichstag will probably be offended that I have to deny it the honor of appearing in person. I

BISMARCK'S LETTERS

can not publicly tell all the reasons that necessitate my remaining here, therefore assist Delbrück to spread the opinion that the journey would be too great a hardship for me. I was not sick, but not strong enough to stand the journey in addition to the Reichstag, and then to remain capable of attending to business. That I should not return exactly refreshed to this workhouse after three nights of travel, eight days of Reichstag, and again a ride of sixty hours back is no lie either; otherwise you need not fear that I am feeling bad, physically I mean. There is much vexation, as everywhere else, where there are many unoccupied princes, but I am getting more hardened, to be sure.

17th. Delbrück is not going to leave before this afternoon. Tell him, and it is the truth, how gratefully I admire his unceasing and successful power of work. You know that my ability of acknowledging is not great, but he so penetrates me that I even have to speak of it to you in my letters, which

TO HIS WIFE

are generally filled with other thoughts than thoughts of business. Our artillery is still silent, after about three times as many as can immediately be used have been brought on. I was right from the beginning, two months ago, when I was opposed to a siege of Paris and in favor of other war methods; but now that the great army has been nailed here for two months and our enthusiasm is oozing and the Frenchman is arming, the siege must be seen through; but it seems as though they wish to let the four hundred big thunderers and their hundred thousands of pounds of balls stand until after the war is over and we go back to Berlin. And it is not a question of bombarding the town either, but only of the detached forts. Those whose influence is credited with these delays probably do not know this at all. God may know what it is all good for. Cordial greetings to the children, and Oberchen,¹ whose faithfulness you praise. Have you snow

¹ Privy Counselor von Obernitz.

BISMARCK'S LETTERS

there? Here we have again mild sunshine alternating with rain.

Your most faithful (in spite of Oberchen)

v. B.

49

VERSAILLES, 11, 22, '70.

I only write you, my heart, to tell you that I have good news from Bill. Carl Dönhof saw him yesterday riding on his black hunting horse and very cheerful. I am sitting in work up to my ears, but am getting through with Bavaria and Würtemberg, which pleases me and makes me forget the Anglo-Russian vexation. Your journey to Reinfeld causes me some uneasiness on account of your dear father. I hope he is well. Write immediately about it. I am well, but busy, day and night. Roon is sick with anger over the intrigues against the bombardment of the Parisian forts. In case that it ever should become known why our good soldiers have to sleep so long in shell fire and are not

TO HIS WIFE

permitted to attack, there will be bad blood; and it will be known, for there are too many people who believe it. Whether the King knows of it and permits it or is deceived, the opinions differ; I willingly believe the latter. The conspiracy, if such be, reaches high up into the General Staff, which I do not like anyhow, excepting the good and judicious old Moltke. The success has, emperor-mad, gone to their heads, and I often fear that this arrogant overself-estimation will yet be visited upon us. Behind Moltke's name many hide themselves. He himself has grown old and lets go what will go. The regiments save us, not the generals. Good night, my heart; greet your father and the children.

Your most faithful

v. B.

BISMARCK'S LETTERS.

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TO COUNT H. BISMARCK.

VERSAILLES, *December 1, '70.*

MY BELOVED HERBERT:

I do not know whether your mother has come back from Reinfeld; I hardly believe so, as, in view of the weakness of your grandfather, the leave-taking will be hard. If she should be in Reinfeld long enough for it to reach her, give her information directly that I wrote. My last letter was addressed to Reinfeld; but as I was led to believe, judging by the news from there, that Mama must have left by the time it would have reached there, I stopped it in Berlin by wire, where it is probably lying now. There were several things in it, the careful treatment of which in R. I was not so sure of after the departure

¹ Published in the sixth volume of the *Bismarck Jahrbuch*, p. 237.

TO HIS WIFE

of our ladies. I always feared until now that my letters would miss them if I wrote to R., as the return was postponed several times, which I consider only natural. Two or three Reinfelder smoked goose-breasts would be quite welcome here; after those also a ham, if there is sure and quick opportunity. If our ladies are in Berlin, give them my cordial greetings. I am well; I eat and drink whatever I like; weather mild; since yesterday clear and cold. I rode to Marly and climbed the tower (about 100 feet high) of the water-works, from which Babel can quite clearly be seen from the Pantheon at the right to the Arc de Triomphe at the left, which is cut by the sloping profile of Mont Valérien. They defended themselves yesterday and the day before still valiantly. The Würtembergers lost forty officers and seven hundred men yesterday; fought very bravely. To-day three months ago at Sedan—and in three months our artillery can not get the first shot upon this fortress not very

BISMARCK'S LETTERS

strong in itself, which holds only 60,000 men, field-troops, and paralyzes 300,000 of ours.

Your faithful father,

v. B.

51

VERSAILLES, *December 7, '70.*

MY BELOVED HEART:

I will force myself now to send you at least a few lines, though the unfortunate three o'clock mail is again pressing breathlessly, and Weimar's lord is expecting me. Herbert wrote philosophically the other day of Bill: "It is really sad that he writes so little, but, well, it can't be helped, I suppose." If anything had happened to him I should know it ere this through military reports and therefore believe that he is well and wallows in oysters between Rouen and Havre. I do not know where he is exactly, but it is very likely that there are no German mail connections in the whole region which the Army of the North now occupies, and as soon as such are

TO HIS WIFE

instituted, the dammed-up stream of Bill's ink will find its way to you. Your question from Reinfeld whether to send a smoked goose-breast was very surprising to me as I had counted on the goose itself. I have been eating some here, charity gifts, which do not always resemble the ideal of Reinfeld. Also "weissauer" we should be only too ready to eat, after that ham. After the glorious victories on the Loire and in the north our great army of Paris is sitting still as ever, whether "Fast, in its prison walls of earth," or, like Thor, "its knees encircled by feminine garments," impeding their walking, the Lord knows; but it is saddening and it costs more men than any attack. Our good Pomeranians, the Ninth and Forty-ninth Regiments, paid for the victory of the 2d with much blood, likewise the brave Württembergers. Moltke is also, and of course with deciding voice, against an attack and in favor of all armistices. The attack would cost us 1,000 men. I do not believe it. This

BISMARCK'S LETTERS

defensive waiting for hostile sorties, the daily small losses, the sickness have, in these two months, cost about 10,000 men. I, of course, abstain from putting my civilian opinion forth in presence of such authorities; but the good Roon has been real sick with anger about our passiveness and his vain attempts to get us to an attack. He is better now, resigned; only nobody must speak of the matter; he becomes immediately sick with bitterness. He really stays here only for my sake, because I should else become an absolute recluse, politically and sentimentally. I do not mean that I have to combat the resistance of all in the political field—on the contrary; but I have not here a human soul to talk to about the future or the past. When one has been too long a Minister, and with it has had, by the providence of God, some success, one feels distinctly how the cold waters of the swamp of envy and hatred rise gradually higher and higher up to one's heart. One does not

TO HIS WIFE

gain any new friends; the old ones die or step back in disgruntled modesty, and the coldness from above grows, as is peculiar to the natural history of princes, even the best. Every affection needs a response if it is meant to last. In short, I am feeling cold, spiritually, and I long to be with you and in the solitude of the country. No healthy heart is able to endure this Court life permanently. But I am healthy in body, more than I have been for years or days, and greet you and the children in heartfelt love and a little homesickness.

Your

v. B.

52

VERSAILLES, *December 12, '70.*

MY BELOVED HEART:

Shortly before the mail leaves I write only to inform you that I have good news from Bill and through your friend Edwin, in a letter dated the day before yesterday from

BISMARCK'S LETTERS

Rouen. He has been ordered to the staff guard of the First Army Corps; that is to say, to the personal protection of the commander, a position correspondingly less exposed, as the commander is not permitted to expose himself. Bill entered Rouen as the first Prussian. The inhabitants are said to be less hostile than most the other French people. We had clear frosty weather here, 5° (Réaumur); since last night rain again and the snow begins to melt. The princes bother me with their officiousness; also my most gracious one with all the small difficulties that come up for him in connection with the very simple Emperor question caused by princely prejudices and trivialities. Next week Christmas; and what shall I give you, you poor little woman, and our daughter? Most gladly myself, but no hope of that!

At last, Roon has been charged with the transportation of the ammunition, and in a week he hopes to have all that is necessary here. Would that this had happened two

TO HIS WIFE

months sooner! Much might be told of that, but better by way of mouth. I should like to give Herbert a fine sabre-blade for Christmas, also Bill, but it must be the usual permissible form. When I say blade, I mean sabre with scabbard, but the value must lie in the blade. God save you all.

v. B.

53

VERSAILLES, *December 14, '70.*

MY DEAR HEART:

You have spoiled me so that I look every morning, when Engel steps into the room, at his hands, whether there be any letters. The past five days they were empty, and that worries me a little; perhaps only because you were at other times so industrious. I enter upon all sorts of speculations whether Christmas work, or, which God may prevent, sickness or nursing others keeps you from writing.

I am passably well in spite of storm and

BISMARCK'S LETTERS

rain; tired out with vexation about the well-known themes, bothered with work beyond all measure, through the fault of people, not through real necessity, else I should not complain. I hope you have the good news in my last letter about Bill, that he is well in Rouen. Cordial greetings in post haste.

Your

v. B.

54

VERSAILLES, 12, 19.

MY BELOVED HEART:

Many thanks for your letter, which I——
'As far as this I was, then interruption by business; now closing of mail. Seen courier from Rouen, who spoke to Bill the day before yesterday, laughed (as all do) when I asked. Goose-breast forwarded.

Your

v. B.

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TO HIS WIFE

55

Telegram.

Sent VERSAILLES, the 24th of December, '70, 2.40 P. M.

COUNTESS BISMARCK:

Bill wrote me the day before yesterday from Amiens. There and here all well. God's blessing for the holiday.

VON BISMARCK.

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VERSAILLES, 12, 24, '70.

MY BELOVED HEART:

It is hard to be separated to-day, but when I think of Bonn a year back, we have plenty of cause to thank God that we, in the hope of a speedy reunion, are only separated to-day. The enclosure will comfort you about Bill for the time being. Smoked goose-breast, then he will write! I shall send him another to-day by the same courier. At last there is an attack upon Paris in view, before New-Year's Eve it is to be hoped. What

BISMARCK'S LETTERS

Roon's and my work of months were unable to bring about, the storm of the Berlin newspapers and the echo of it which the Reichstag brought along, seem to have effected. Also Moltke is said to be converted since he received anonymous newspaper poems which showed that his system, as though the thing did not concern him, found no mercy before the public opinion. The glory of the leadership is lying in the admirable valor of the troops. Only a little less of it and none of the leaders would be able to stand against criticism. Owing to the scattering of the army from Tours to Lille and to the overhasty attacks, then to the sleepy conduct of the war before Paris, there is not a single department in France in which we are complete master, so that we could enforce a contribution. May God better it, his arm is not flesh. In that I trust, when I see these abandoned people. We are all sinners, but not so Babylonian and not so refractory against God. Kiss and greet the children,

TO HIS WIFE

give Marie whatever she wishes from me, something of gold, as a souvenir of the times. For Herbert a double-barreled gun, if not to-day, then for his birthday.

Your most faithful

v. B.

Have you received my telegram of to-day?

57¹

TO COUNT H. BISMARCK.

VERSAILLES, *December 26, '70.*

MY DEAR HERBERT:

Cordial wishes for your birthday are all, I am sorry to say, that I can entrust to the paper, but thank God that he has graciously protected you this last year in all dangers, and preserved you to us. It would have been a sad day of mourning for all of us instead of your birthday, if many things had come out differently, but for the breadth of a hair, in Bonn, on the battlefield, or in

¹ Published in the sixth volume of the Bismarck Jahrbuch, p. 238.

BISMARCK'S LETTERS

Nauheim. Thank God with me for his grace and for the joy with which I think of you. I wrote Mama that I wanted to give you a gun; select it yourself, with detachable barrels as rifle, case, arms, and the number of the year 1870 under the latter on the plate. . . . Here we shall, I hope, celebrate your birthday with the first efforts of the artillery. It was not God's will that mine should rule.

Your faithful father,

v. B.

58

2D HOLIDAY.

MY DARLING:

Only a greeting and thanks for the charming cups. The little tree was lit for the coffee, and I wrote at its flickering light to Munich. Then Keudell called us again from our drawing-room into the dining-room; I had a beautiful large tree, and for everybody something under it. Even if the gun for Herbert should cost one hundred thaler and

TO HIS WIFE

more, it is a memento of serious times. His letter is already closed and I must mail this one separately. Cordial greetings to Marie and Oberchen and all.

Your most faithful

v. B.

Received the letter of the 23d. Be gentle and good, my heart, we are all wanting in the glory, and must let the will of God be done, who is kind to us beyond our merit.

59

VERSAILLES, *January 1, '71.*

MY BELOVED HEART:

The first time that I write '71 it shall be for you; it will bring us luck. The beginning is good, letters from you and from Herbert, with good contents, when I woke up; and I see that everything is tolerably well in Varzin, and here; the striking proof has been furnished that our artillery is superior to the French. Mont Avon shot to pieces in

BISMARCK'S LETTERS

one day and occupied without loss. The heretofore opposers to the attack are converted, though a little sour-looking on account of the quick successes of the artillery; for everybody thinks now by himself we could have done this two months ago, if a dozen of people of influence had not hindered it for several reasons. More by way of mouth! For now I hope to see you all this year, of which there have elapsed already fifteen hours. I am glad of Herbert's joy; be good to Einsiedel; I saw him being brought in on the stretcher in his cloak when I went into the house to Herbert on the 17th of August. He has an honest face. I feared immediately that his poor long leg would heal slowly. All this vexation has gone somewhat into my left leg, the old vein over the knuckle. But I kept myself still and dieted for three days; yesterday only one glass of weak punch; and now it is going again. I still use it as an excuse not to make any New-Year's visits, as it still hurts me

TO HIS WIFE

when I have to stand long, which is unavoidable at Court. Grand Duchess Helen sent me charming caviar and six bashliks. She remains always equally gracious and kind. For Marie's good courage I thank God that at least one of us sees otherwise than black. Would that her George's dollar, that is lying before me attached to my watch, reflected on me also some lighter pink-cloud lamb-coloring. It is wearisome when old people are becoming so peevish. May God change it to the better.

Your most faithful,

V. B.

60

Telegram.

Sent VERSAILLES, January 1, '71, 7 P. M.

COUNTESS BISMARCK:

Received congratulations from Bill by telegraph. Yours also.

V. BISMARCK.

BISMARCK'S LETTERS

61

VERSAILLES, 1, 4, '71.

MY HEART:

I received your letter of the 1st just now and beg God with you that he, first of all, bring us together again. If you were here I should like these winter quarters just as much as any other, and look upon events in resignation. But that would not do, wives and daughters are forbidden at headquarters, else there would be too many of them, for even the most incorrigible casino-fly gets a longing here for the at other times scorned domesticity. It could have been different a long time ago, if they had shot sooner. After the brilliant successes of the first trials with the beleaguering artillery nobody disputed it any longer, and it would be hard to find one now who would admit to have ever been against shooting, and yet only three weeks have elapsed since of those who were admitted to the war council, Roon was the only one who thought correctly. General-Adju-

TO HIS WIFE

tant Boyen still tried to convince the gentlemen of the Reichstag that Roon, for want of sense, and I, out of bitterness against the General Staff, were the only ones who cried for shooting, because we both did not understand such things. Boyen's further connection you know. He is, so to say, "ambassador" to this royal camp. To-day it was intended that we should begin seriously, but God did not wish it, and sent a dense fog, so that one can not see one hundred feet ahead. Let us hope for to-morrow; the lost three months can never be made up.

5th. At last they have shot; since eight o'clock I counted fifteen to twenty shots in every minute. The French did not respond, and now, two o'clock, ours are also silent. Perhaps a sufficient effect has been made already? I am very curious.

What does the good Suabian friend really mean? I do not understand his letter. Answer him kindly.

Bill has been seen well yesterday morning

BISMARCK'S LETTERS

by a courier who arrived here to-day. Enclosed the rarity of his handwriting. Thank Herbert for his letter and kiss the good Marie for me for the same reason.

Your most faithful

v. B.

To-day post haste.

(Enclosed the following slip by the hand of the Count Lehndorf:)

VERSAILLES, *January 5, '71.*

8.15 o'clock the first shot from our batteries—since then several. Perhaps you have known this for some time, but I did not wish to lose the opportunity to be the first at your awakening to bring you the news of the final fulfilment of your wish.

9.30.

LEHNDORF.

62

VERSAILLES, 1, 9, '71.

MY DEAR HEART:

In flying haste of business I give the courier a few lines before three o'clock, to quiet you about my health. During the last

TO HIS WIFE

three days I have taken walks and have driven even before that. Lauer thinks it to be the first announcement of gout, thus a permit for twenty-five years at least, even if it should be only an occasional twitch in the big toe. I have sent Bill cigars several times, that he may make friends for himself. To-day Roon's fiftieth anniversary; too bad he is lying in bed. I was just on the way to him, and hope to be one of the few whom he sees. He suffers through fault of others. Both of us have paid for the insistence upon the siege with our health. Kraft Hohenlohe, zealous and expert, throws a bombshell a distance of 10,000 paces. Heavy snowfall. Cordial greetings to the children.

Your most faithful

v. B.

I enjoy your letter every morning. Read Psalm 27 yesterday in bed and fell asleep comforted with verse 14. Do likewise, and with thanks in spite of all.

BISMARCK'S LETTERS

(Enclosed the following telegram:)

COUNT BISMARCK-SCHÖNHAUSEN,

Versailles:

My most cordial congratulations to the Cross First Class. Regret your indisposition. Hope that the bombardment will restore you soon! You will presently receive bonbonnière with chocolates from me.

MARIE PRINCESS CHARLES OF PRUSSIA.

63

Telegram.

Sent VERSAILLES, January 10, '71, 3.50 P. M.

COUNTESS BISMARCK:

Bill here with Baron von Manteuffel; I all well again.

VON BISMARCK.

64

VERSAILLES, 1, 11, '71.

MY DARLING:

Our fat child, in order to take leave to-day, woke me earlier than I am accustomed to get up. He has just left with Manteuffel for the army formed at Vesoul, the command of

TO HIS WIFE

which his present chief will take, because of Zastrow's illness. He is very well and strong, and Manteuffel satisfied with him; he is "practical." Manteuffel tells him that he will look out for him out of gratefulness to you and your "tea" in Frankfort. I am glad that he remains with the army staff; he sees and learns more than in the regiment, and he is really everywhere in God's hand, but, according to human knowledge, there less exposed to the frontireur-murderers; which I mention for your sake, for I fear you worry and fret yourself sick, which part will come after the tension is over. I have been going out for a long time; drive daily, as it is too slippery and cold for riding on horseback. Bill came yesterday morning, just when 150 music men (Fourth Corps) of this division gave me the enclosed serenade, after which I treated them all to hot punch. Everything is covered white with snow, moderately cold, clear weather, which is made use of by our artillery for continued shooting. I am

BISMARCK'S LETTERS

counting on the average twenty to twenty-five shots in a minute, and with some of them the windows and the ground tremble gently as far away as this. I think the negotiations will now soon begin. Cordial greetings to the children, and fight off sorrows with prayer.

Your most faithful

v. B.

The music bands of the Ninth Division:

PROGRAM.

- No. 1. "Hoch Deutschland, herrliche Siegesbraut," Sieges-Fest March, by Franz Abt.
- No. 2. Ouverture of the Opera Don Juan, by W. A. Mozart.
- No. 3. Hohenfriedberg March, by Frederick the Great.
- No. 4. "Am Meere" Lied, by Franz Schubert.
- No. 5. Jubel-Fest March—Deutscher Kriegs und Sieges March, by Georg Goldschmidt.

TO HIS WIFE

65

VERSAILLES, 1, 21, '71.

MY DARLING:

I have not written you for a terribly long time. Pardon me, but this emperor birth was a difficult one, and kings at such times have their queer desires like women before they give up to the world what indeed they can not keep. Acting as accoucheur I had several times the urgent need to be a shell and to burst so that the whole edifice might go to pieces. Necessary business does not wear me much, but the unnecessary things gall.

Löper,¹ I hope, has written you about me; he promised me to. To-day Struck came to me; I believe you sent him reconnoitering; he spoke words which I had written to you. He was satisfied, after he had gone through his hocus-pocus of feeling, pressing, and listening. Riding and lemon-juice are his remedies, also Vichy. Well, all that is being

¹ Reporting Counselor in the Home Office.

BISMARCK'S LETTERS

done, but the roads are so muddy from the rain that it is possible to ride only on the macadamized roads. Poor Roon is still very weak. Schleinitz is trying to burden me with the unpleasantness about "Imperial and Royal Highness"; it rests entirely with the King and the Chamberlain; in time it will, perhaps, be possible; the sisterly resistance has been so far very strong. The Grand Duke of Baden is really sensible and mediating, but he is the only one who assists me, now and then, in the affairs. Carl has been indisposed for a long time, stomach. Hatzfeld was the same, cold. Abeken had some "writer's cramp." Bucher, *unberufen*, always like a fish in water. Read Scherr, he is really a lying driveler. Carl reports just now that sixty of our artillery have been bombarding St. Denis since nine o'clock. Last evening H. M. and the Crown Prince stepped suddenly into my room just when we were getting up from table; Trochu wanted an armistice,—not much! Cordial greetings

TO HIS WIFE

to the children, *Ober-* (Upper) and *Under-*
nitze.

Your

v. B.

66

MY HEART:

I have been negotiating with Favre the past three days, day and night, and if our side is not going to cause too many difficulties, an armistice of three weeks will begin the day after to-morrow, which will probably lead to peace; to the surrender of all the forts of Paris at any rate. May God give his blessing. Favre is here. Farewell, greetings.

Your

v. B.

67

VERSAILLES, 1, 27, '71.

MY DEAR HEART:

I have been having so much work the last few days that I had little time for writing. It seems that we shall, in a few days, have an armistice of three weeks; the cannons have been silent since midnight. Will it lead

BISMARCK'S LETTERS

to peace? It seems so, and may God grant it. Anyhow it will give us, if it should be accomplished, all the forts of Paris, and after the lapse of three weeks we shall, so God will, occupy the city also. Farewell, my heart. Favre is coming with generals.

Cordial greetings. Embrace the children, or is the long one already on the way hither? Marie, Köller says, is getting stout. She will press on my horse, the dearest child.

Your

v. B.

68

Telegram.

VERSAILLES, *January 28, '71.*

Capitulation of all Paris forts and armistice of three weeks on land and water signed by me and M. Jules Favre. Paris army remains prisoner within the city.

BISMARCK.

69

VERSAILLES, 1, 30, '71.

I am quite well, my heart. The High double visit was only curiosity and zeal for

TO HIS WIFE

an important affair. I was still sitting at table with the bureau when the Exalted surprise entered. I have the house daily full of Frenchmen. Favre works in my little parlor; I in my bedroom; there is so much to arrange and to write that I seldom go to bed before two or three, but sleep then very well till ten or eleven. Paris is living only on our bread; the people had no idea how thoroughly they themselves had destroyed all the railroads.

Cordial greetings.

Your

v. B.

I write with pencil, because I have not the time to dip my pen into the ink-well.

70

February 1; '71.

Well, and much work. Every day Frenchmen from early in the morning till late in the evening, for the execution of the armistice. The people are so inexperienced in

BISMARCK'S LETTERS

business that I have to help them in their work. Favre is sitting in his chair daily from twelve to ten in the evening writing in my room. Many thanks to Marie for letter.

Your

v. B.

71

VERSAILLES, 2, 3, '71.

MY HEART:

To-morrow I am expecting Herbert, and shall give him the fat letter. But how could the dear boy leave without horses? He has to march with his detachment, indeed, at least from Lagny here, and then farther on to the mustering out, even if he should not be ordered back to the regiment. Well, we shall, as God will, see to-morrow what he thinks about it, and I am heartily glad to be able to grasp him and see him again.

Yesterday I was in St. Cloud, Battery One, just opposite Rothschild's. Without having seen it, it is impossible to have an idea of the destruction which the artillery of Mont

TO HIS WIFE

Valérien has caused in these charming places west and south of the Bois de Boulogne, from Meudon to St. Cloud. Burned ruins are the least; completely demolished are the houses, and in the fantastic bits which the shells allowed to stand, one may see furniture and wall-paper in inaccessible, overhanging upper stories, silk, marble, bronze. I drove with Roon, who is considerably better and who sends his regards. I telegraphed Princess Charles to-day. The "Highness" question will, I suppose, be settled in time and according to wishes. I found the French Ministers and generals here when I returned from St. Cloud. They can't live without me; at least not work. Perhaps they will yet split up and fight among themselves. Gambetta apparently gave in at first, causes now difficulties, and accuses Favre and the Parisians of treason. I do not believe that he will find a following. The desire for peace is dominant. But he forces us to carry the armistice through in

BISMARCK'S LETTERS

a harder manner than we should have done otherwise. Keudel, pale and wounded, is stepping in with papers. Kiss the dear Marie for me, and good-by.

Your

v. B.

72

Telegram.

VERSAILLES, *February 4, '71.*

COUNTESS VON BISMARCK:

Herbert here in best condition. Please find out what there is known officially about his removal to the regiment, and as soon as the information is received there, forward it here to me by telegraph.

v. BISMARCK.

73

VERSAILLES, *February 5, '71.*

His Majesty the Emperor and King has deigned to grant the Iron Cross, second class, to your Excellency's son, second lieutenant in the First Guard Dragoon Regiment, stationed here. I most obediently

TO HIS WIFE

have the honor to transmit the same herewith, most respectfully leaving to you the further forwarding of the same.

(Sig.) V. ALBEDYLL.

To the Imperial Chancellor COUNT V. BISMARCK, Excellency.

Well, at last; he earned it last August, but the Court air, in which they grow, was lacking in the lazaretto. I am well, and Frenchmen daily in excess.

Your

V. B.

74

VERSAILLES, 2, 10, '71.

MY DARLING:

Herbert is just departing and leaves me alone with the weather, the usual kind at such farewells, gloomy and rainy. It has given me great pleasure to see him. His removal has been proposed by the regiment, not yet ordered by the division, so he has to lead his detachment back. It is just as well that he should attend to his horses and things himself, if it should really come to

BISMARCK'S LETTERS

that, and that he should see you again and attest to you the groundlessness for all the newspaper canards about my health. I rode with him yesterday for four hours, and only one day in weeks have I lost through anger and thus been indisposed.

“Herr Favre” is being announced, and the mail is also ready. Greeting Marie.

Your

v. B.

75

Monday, 2, 13, '71.

I quite lost sight of Herbert. I wrote and telegraphed him to Lagny, without success. Telegram from Brózowski,¹ which I forwarded meanwhile to Berlin, arrived the day after his marching. It is perhaps better so on account of his horses and things. Bill was seen well three days ago. Courier laughed again in reporting it.

In haste,

v. B.

¹ Commander of the First Guard Dragoons.

TO HIS WIFE

76

2, 17, '71.

We have spring weather here the last eight days; buds on shrubs, white snow-bells¹ in the garden and violets under glass. Cordial greetings to Marie. In three weeks I hope to be with you, my heart, if it is God's will.

Your

v. B.

77

VERSAILLES, 2, 27, '71.

MY DEAR HEART:

I badly rewarded your faithfulness in writing me daily, and every time when Engel brought me your letter to my bed, regretted and made good resolutions, but one day passed as the other, daily six, sometimes seven hours Thiers and Favre. My little friend Thiers is very clever and charming,

¹ Were enclosed.

BISMARCK'S LETTERS

but no business man for verbal negotiations. The foam of ideas gushes irresistibly out of him as out of an open bottle, and tires the patience because it hinders getting at the drinkable stuff, which is the thing. With all that, he is a decent little fellow, with white hair, respectable and charming, good old-fashioned French manners, and it was very hard for me to be as hard upon him as I had to be. This the villains knew and therefore pushed him forward. Yesterday at last we signed; gained more than I think is good for my personal political calculation. But I have to regard, upward and downward, sentiments which just won't calculate. We take Alsace and German Lorraine, Metz with very indigestible elements, and over 1,300,000 thaler. The last difficulty will now be to get these conditions in Bordeaux through the Assembly of seven hundred heads strong. But God led us so far with his strong hand. He will also make the peace firm and solid for us, for which beside much

TO HIS WIFE

rabble in France, so many honest people of ours and also of the opponent have fallen, are crippled or in mourning. My heart is full with humble thanks, and I hope to be with you soon with both your boys in blue, in, perhaps, a fortnight. May God save you and give us a speedy reunion at home. Regarding the "victorious return," no more danger than anywhere in life under God's protection. Cordial greetings, above all, to Marie and to your faithful comfortress, Frau von E(isendecker).

Your

v. B.

78

VERSAILLES, *March 5, '71.*

MY DEAR HEART:

It is to-day just five months since I moved into this poor little room, and to-day I resolved, with the help of God, to leave it to-morrow. Whether I shall succeed depends

BISMARCK'S LETTERS

upon emperors, grand dukes, and opportunities to travel; of the latter none probably will offer itself before next Thursday from Lagny, if I will not fall into local trains. I shall stay in Metz overnight, and the following day, via Bingen and by express, hurry on to Berlin and you. Meanwhile everybody pulls me by the coat-tails and bothers me with questions which nobody can answer. His Majesty is going to Ferrières on Tuesday. I, if I can, to-morrow. The decision about it I shall have not before this evening. Then the King wishes yet to see many troops. He thinks that he will never see them again, as for the next three years there will be no reviews, and that he will not live long enough to see them later. But he is so well that I do not see why he should not become over eighty years old, if anybody does. Your fear of the Parisians was unnecessary. I entered, with Gordon,¹ through Porte Maillot, on

¹ Commander of the Eleventh Division, which entered Paris after the parade at Longchamps.

TO HIS WIFE

Wednesday, on horseback, turned back at the Arc de Triomphe, as I am not allowed to pass it before H. M. had done so, and rode then alone back with Wartensleben¹; was recognized everywhere, hissed a little, but, indeed, only by very small boys. Of assassins not a trace. The King will not get in at all now, as the French hurried so with the ratification. I am sorry for it, for nothing would have happened to him either. At taps on Thursday thousands of Parisians followed arm-in-arm with our soldiers, and at the "helmet off for prayer" everybody took his hat off, and said *voilà ce qui nous manque*, and that, I presume, is right. Before the end of the week I shall be with you, so God will.

Your most faithful

v. B.

¹ Lieutenant in the Fifth Lancers and attaché.

BISMARCK'S LETTERS

79

SAARBRÜCKEN, 3, 8, '71.

Telegram.

COUNTESS VON BISMARCK-SCHÖNHAUSEN,

Berlin:

I have just arrived at Saarbrücken, and hope to arrive at Anhalt Depot by express Thursday morning.

BISMARCK.

APPENDIX

TEN LETTERS FROM THE YEARS 1867-1873

80

VARZIN, *June 27, '67.*

MY DEAR HEART:

Bernhard left this morning after he had still bothered me at five o'clock about Kniephof, and thus managed that I got up at six and rode about for five hours on Walter, up and down steep hills, with beech-nurseries, brimm,¹ and heather; then I ate dinner with the pastor at Wussow, gave him a lesson in ciphering, and will now try a wagon from Cöslin. It is right nice here outside the house, and I advise you to come soon. But first send beds, and dishes which Engel has noted upon the enclosed slip. There are only

¹ Pomeranian broom.

BISMARCK'S LETTERS

two poor sets of beds here, thus six more at least are wanted. Did you order three from Reinfeld? They could be here within a few hours. From Schönhausen have our glasses sent, the red and the carved chairs, at least one writing-desk with locks, or two, and all that can be spared of beds. Here is one dining-room, two drawing-rooms (for a billiard-room or third drawing-room is time enough later), four sleeping-rooms and three guest-chambers to be furnished. For this purpose send now whatever can be spared in Schönhausen and Berlin; then we shall see what more we want. The two inlaid cigar cabinets with tables which you gave me might be sent here from Berlin; in their place in my old room the roll-top desk from the antechamber of Decker's¹ board-room. With what shall we furnish the room of his Majesty? We are short here. I do not know if I should not stay here, as long as I

¹ Wilhelmstrasse 75, formerly in the possession of Mr. Decker.

APPENDIX

am here, and wait for you. I feel, though lonely, quite comfortable here; how much more pleasant it will be with you. But I can not write much. The ink hates me. Cordial greetings to the children, and come soon, all of you, but first send furniture and fifty bottles of red wine and as many of beer. Now I shall go driving to see forest and sunshine.

Your most faithful

v. B.

Send me immediately, paper,
wealing sax, and official seal.

81

VARZIN, *June 30, '69.*

MY BELOVED:

I had the best of intentions to write you, but neither time nor pen, paper nor ink. The latter has arrived, but whence shall the time come? After having breakfasted and newspapered, I wander in hunting-boots into the forests, hill-climbing and swamp-wading,

BISMARCK'S LETTERS

learn geography, and plan reservations; as soon as I return home I have the horses saddled and the same business is continued, to the disgust of Joseph, Röschen, and Walter. The latter, running up-hill, is not afraid of anything, but down-hill he sometimes lets his four hoofs take root and declares with resigned silence, it is impossible. There are, indeed, very thick beeches here, also beams and blocks, deserts, reservations, pools, moors, heaths, broom, roes, mountain-cocks, impenetrable beech and oak forests, ready for felling, and other things which give me pleasure, when I listen to the ter-zetto of pigeon, heron, and glebe, or hear the complaints of the tenants about the misdeeds of the wild sows. How can I write you with all this? I was in Brotzen one evening to examine a piece of woodland there situated and the beautiful Bülow,¹ whom I met also in Beswitz yesterday. Bernhard was not so entertaining as usual, he broods and cal-

¹ Née von Zanthier.

APPENDIX

culates too much internally. I believe I shall leave Kniephof to him in case I should find something here for sale. But when I am there I always run the risk of rooting into the ground. I found it now charming again, only they never let me alone, and I find so much more to converse about with the trees than with men. Do come soon, please, and let the boys follow by themselves. Beds, I hope, are waiting in Cöslin, whence I wrote on receipt of your telegram that all boxes be sent in all haste. Do not bring any girls except your maid; perhaps you do not want even her. Here is a highly recommended linen-girl, who attended to the linen at Blumenthal's for three years. The old manservant is also very useful, and especially the cook, and I have to keep all these people till St. Michaelmas anyhow. So do not bring either Riepe¹ or the girl, unless for personal reasons. Send some green opaque material for a dark window-hanging, and to cover the

¹ His chef in Berlin.

BISMARCK'S LETTERS

inner sides of glass doors through which one would not like to be seen. That I shall appear once more in Berlin before your arrival here I hardly "reckon." Just depict my condition as being so run down that I could not imperil the visible benefit of the cure by the hardship of this journey, and come yourself soon.

Your most faithful

v. B.

82

VARZIN, *July 4, '67.*

MY DEAR HEART:

A shipment of furniture came yesterday from Stolp, another one from Berlin to-day, the latter comprising the things of my old room. Your telegram, according to which cases were waiting in Cöslin, and which were not to be found afterward, no doubt referred to the glass and porcelain things, lamps, etc., which had arrived already before me on the 25th, and therefore the confusion. Beds (two) have arrived from Reinfeld and also

APPENDIX

the old Frankfort sleeping-couch. Curtains are entirely lacking, about twenty-four windows. I ordered bedsteads, two long ones, in Stolp, and sent four short ones back again. Besides these are three and two sleeping-sofas and a few for the domestics. What is wanting we shall get here. You will buy curtains best there; about twenty windows for the present, quite simple, light white summer ones, as we shall not make winter quarters for the present, you know. I miss my hunting spectacles; please send them. It will be better if we do not build in No. 76 this year, for at the removal of the furniture we should be present, I suppose. The day after to-morrow I hope (to go) to Reinfeld.

This morning I was surprised in a wilderness near the Crangen dividing line to my thorough astonishment by twenty-six, for the most part pretty, young ladies, members of a girls' boarding-school kept by the minister's wife, and of whose existence I had so

BISMARCK'S LETTERS

far been ignorant. English and French girls among them; bouquets; hurrah in treble voices and Prussian air! The late King's singing mattress in Colberg is nothing in comparison with them, only these songstresses were not without charms, and that disarmed me. Röschen sank into her knees with fright over this herd of game from the bush. I am longing for you all very much, and hope my own, all in white, will be ready for traveling on Monday at least.

My heart's wishes to the child, and greetings.

Your most faithful

v. B.

Please send the Düppel inkstand and similar souvenirs which are in the way there!

83

VARZIN, 10, 28, '68.

MY LOVE:

I am so unused to being separated from you that I find it horrible here and count the

APPENDIX

hours till all of you get back again.¹ Your telegrams from Cöslin and Pasewalk arrived to my great joy. Adelheid has gone to Rein-feld with Eugenia,² father at least remained. I drove with him and Jenny (very much scratched) in rain and storm to the irrigation meadows. Carl³ rode to Fanny.⁴ Wil-mowski and the Counselor to-morrow. Cor-dial greetings to the two Maries and mothers and fathers.

Your

v. B.

84

VARZIN, 7, 1, '69.

You were very wrong, my heart, not to have come along. It is even more beautiful here than last year; the weather was charm-ing, and the railroad line from Cöslin to Schlawe is the most pleasant for the eye between Stolp and Guntershausen. I was

¹ The family had gone to Kröchlendorf to the wedding of the now Frau von Kotze.

² Fräulein von Reckow.

³ Count Bismarck-Bohlen.

⁴ Nickname of Colonel von Zitzewitz-Püstow.

BISMARCK'S LETTERS

here ten minutes before seven, ran around in the park till sunset, ate cauliflower, wild ducks, and many eggs; saw a roebuck, who was so bold as hardly to get out of my way, and found almost everything grown, excepting a few single ashes. Gretchen throttled six young foxes, but in her excitement also the young black dachshund. Mail coach is tooting; come soon.

Your

v. B.

It is nice here in the forest.

85

BERLIN, *December 15, '69.*

MY BELOVED HEART:

Your telegram of yesterday frightened me hardly less than the first news in Varzin, and I have not been able to find the trusting mood again in which I wrote my last letter. The receipt of a disquieting telegram always imposes upon us the brooding supposition that the recipient is meant to use the ad-

APPENDIX

vantage of time which a telegram has over a letter, for some hurried action on his own part, as, perhaps, for the preparation toward a sudden departure or for the getting of further medical help. Now I committed the folly of asking Busch¹ yesterday by telegraph whether this new case of erysipelas² seemed dangerous to him and received the usual physicianly answer, cunningly calculated for the anxiety of relatives: "Momentarily not dangerous, temperature 39, further developments of the disease to be waited for." If he only answered, "So far no danger," I should go to bed comforted, but in the last phrase I saw the preparing for something worse, for else it would be absolutely superfluous, I think. The result was that I spent a really bad night after a lot of good ones, and offended everybody to-day who had anything to do with me. You may read this now in comfort, for it is now all

¹ Privy Medicinal Counselor in Bonn.

² Count Herbert had fallen sick with erysipelas.

BISMARCK'S LETTERS

over and your good telegram of this morning was the best antidote for the scare, but if I or Marie had telegraphed you this morning, "Papa spent a very bad night," and Struck had sent a similar despatch of comfort on top as the one Busch sent, you also would have probably brooded over it, and such a telegram, when one presses and tears it to pieces, has for nervous people a lot of hidden thorns and hooks which swell up in the dark of the night to horrible instruments of torture.

v. B.

86

EMS, Thursday (Postmark June 2, '70).

I am very tired from the drive and the visits and conversations here, but otherwise I can not complain, except about petitions and "requests for audiences," which pursue me. We dined at the Emperor's, with Grand Duke of Oldenburg, Vladimir, Prince Alex of Hesse, and many Russians of old acquaintance. I shall avoid the evening pleas-

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ures by going to bed soon, though it is not eight yet. I slept very well from Magdeburg to Kassel, then watched the scenery in memory of Frankfort times. Much colder than it is here to-day, I am suré, it can not be behind the Gollenberg either, though there has been a blue sky for the last two hours. Greet the children.

Your

v. B.

Blanquart¹ telegraphed you, I suppose?

87

VARZIN, *Thursday, June 7, '70.*

MY HEART:

I arrived well; immediately went around with Westphal for two hours; then ate pike and mutton, to-day pike and veal, also asparagus of a quality which is better than the Berlin kind. The frost has browned the young beeches at the edges of the forest, blackened many oak-shrubs, otherwise left

¹ A ciphrist.

BISMARCK'S LETTERS

no serious traces on the foliage. Your chestnuts are sound, six or eight of them want new leaves. Your roses fared worse; the Americans are sound, one of them is in bloom; but six or eight of the high-stemmed ones have been, so far, without a sign of life. In the field the rye shows in spots trifling shadings of frost, the potatoes, Pomerania's Consolation, seem to be sound, but the meadows and the red clover have borne out the bath; both look the same as three weeks ago, only with yellow points. I have been six hours in Selitz to-day, satisfied with fields, culture of meadows, and especially with the coming up of the reservations. Then I ate in melancholy singleness. While I was hill-climbing in the heat all my thoughts were directed upon Grätzer beer; but we are out of it, also Klette¹; Schöps my only solace. But it has some "bock" in it, that resists being used in quantities. After dinner I went through park and hedges; saw four deer,

¹ Berlin beer exporter.

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three bucks among them. The circular road¹ is coming on well, also all the red firs; the ones that were hoed are the strongest. Your elder plantation in the white moor had come up, but frozen. The black ground under the bleak pines was all white with the enclosed flower (Blüte, I never wrote the word, has it an h?) three feet high, like blooming myrtle; it is *ledum palustre*, in Pomeranian Schweine-Pors, also wild rosemary. Accept this native nosegay in kindness and greet the children cordially.

Your most faithful

v. B.

I go to bed at ten!

88

FRIEDRICHSRUH, March 12, '72.

We found Bill here on our arrival; feel well and have dined with two Eilers² and Cassel.³ Send me the six forest charts which are lying upon the small étagère, beside my

¹ An avenue.

² Head foresters.

³ Herr von Marwitz.

BISMARCK'S LETTERS

writing chair at the left, up near the edge. My keys, I believe, have been left there; my portfolio is lying in the money-drawer at the right-hand side on the top, 1,000 and a few thaler in it; send me 500 of them. In my sleepiness this morning I took in cash with me only one hard thaler, which I still possess. Klüper very talkative, but not inconvenient. Bill will shoot something to-morrow, deer or dog. I shall sleep as long as I can. Health good. Cordial greetings to Marie and Herbert. Everything here overheated. Good-by.

Your

v. B.

89

PETERSBURG, *May 3, '73.*

MY BELOVED HEART:

I am well, as I telegraphed you before, physically better than in Berlin; I do not sleep long, but well, because the gall has rest and I get to bed physically tired. Yes-

APPENDIX

terday we had, with the King's old luck of weather, four warm hours free from rain, even some sunshine during the parade (your little fur coat did very good service under the greatcoat); breakfast at three o'clock at the Prince of Oldenburg's, Marshalls' banquet at six; gala performance in the evening; a splendid ballet, "Pharaoh's Daughter," with stunning decorations and many pretty ballerinas. I fled from the splendor and heat at eleven, and went to bed directly after I had read your dear letter. At eight I had finished sleeping, but continued snoozing till ten; ate four eggs, and after an hour's audience with both emperors, again much luncheon, almost a dinner, with four wines and four warm dishes. Now I wished to drive to the Islands, but it is raining too hard. But the excursion to Zarskoe will be made in spite of all at about four. Herbert is in Moscow, for which I asked three days' furlough for him yesterday after the parade. He will, I

BISMARCK'S LETTERS

suppose, send you news from there. I hope he has better weather than we here. It is not cold, but wet. I see many hundreds of old acquaintances, who ask much after you, and often cause me some embarrassment. I know 10,000 people more than I can remember, but it is hard to tell a person that he belongs to just those. I call them *mon prince* and refer to our last meeting in Baden, whereupon they answer amiably, *Non c'était à Paris en '67*, or something of the sort, and the following day I have forgotten it again, and they think *il commence à baisser*. I can't help it; memory is used up, and as far as that is concerned, they are right. Otherwise nobody can be more kind and grandly hospitable than they are here to us. The King pleases, as everywhere, yet the Russians think he looks too friendly for a monarch. When he is serious "he has a face like a Tzar."

I can not complain about anything; am also politically satisfied; but I suffer dread-

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fully from homesickness for you. I am no longer used to these long separations. Now there is a rumor of staying even longer than the 7th. Perhaps the Reichstag will stormily ask for me; but so far everything has gone better without me. Except with Sultl;¹ just tell him that I shall be back soon, and greet the children cordially.

Your

v. B.

Saturday: Have been in Zarskoe to-day to dinner; received telegram of Theodor's² death there. Tell Fritz² of my sincere sympathy. Your letter of the 1st received just now.

¹ Black hound.

² Counts von Bismarck-Bohlen.

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